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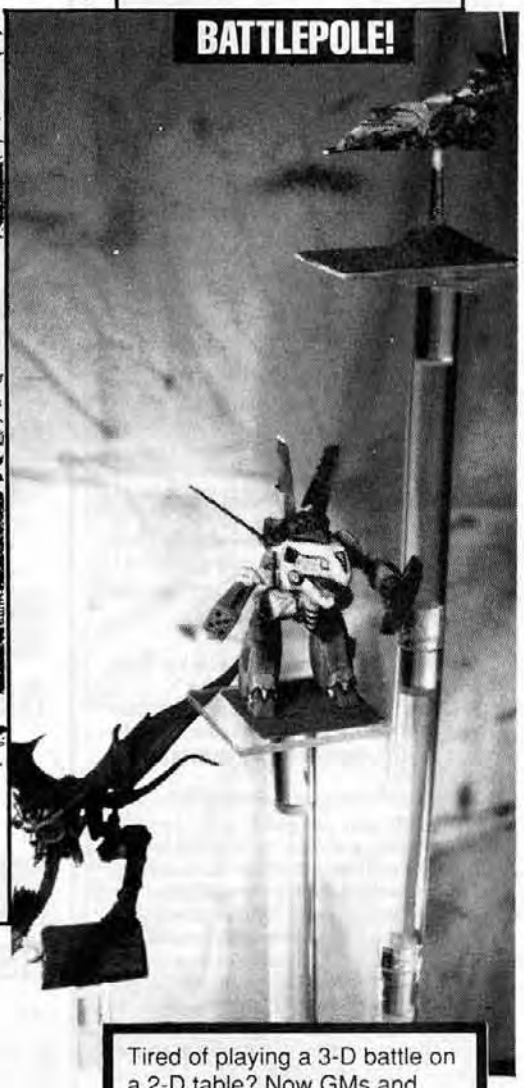
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Dulinor's troopers secure the area damage of a recent raid in this painting from the **MegaTraveller** universe by Raymond VanTilburg.

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The Magazine of Science-Fiction Gaming

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The 112th Medcom needs our help to gain control over the situation in Ohio. *Paul T. Riegel*

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The president of Iraq orders his troops to retake the land delved out to the Kurds, and the DIA needs mercenaries to throw a wrench into his plans. Can you hold off the Iraqi armored forces? *Robert James Christensen*

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2300 AD

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It has been said, with a certain measure of idealism, that justice is blind. More accurately, it is technology, more than justice, that is without sight. For not only will technology allow mankind to reap new benefits in terms of knowledge and opportunity, it will also grant man the ability to prey upon his fellows, and then to escape capture. *Erick Melton*

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50 Fast Cash

Quality control is a common hazard when dealing with an illegal substance. We're talking bad cash, fake flash, nurd nuyen. That's counterfeit—paper money that's not only illegal, but also worthless.
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Those are not dead who let their dust lie.
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Bored by such a trifling mission as destroying another star destroyer? Looking for a new "toy" to play with? How about a way to create villains that would shake even the legendary Skywalker and Solo? Then you'll love the power suit. *Paul Sudlow*

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A warp storm can cut a world completely off from Imperial contact, completely halting both travel and communication.Thus, the inhabitants must learn to live without the Imperium—if they survive.
Paul J. Giguere



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CHALLENGE *Opinion*

In the early 1970s, there was a strong feeling among movie producers that science fiction was dead as a film genre. Everything had been done, it was said, and nobody (well, nobody important) would be able to do any film that could revive the public's interest in SF films.

There would never be any more SF blockbusters, they said, and any SF films would be by minor studios and would be lucky to break even. This prediction came about a year before the release of the film that was to revitalize the SF film genre and change the rest of Hollywood forever—Star Wars.

This scenario has occurred numerous times in the movie and TV industry. Television westerns were officially pronounced dead shortly before the appearance of Lonesome Dove. *Police dramas were dead—until* Hill Street Blues. *Who would have thought pulp adventure could (much less* would*) make a comeback—before* Raiders of the Lost Ark*?*

In the gaming business about seven or eight years ago, roleplaying games were widely held to be in the doldrums. Everything had been done, it was said, and (aside from a few minor efforts by small companies) nothing new would appear. The audience was shrinking, and an industry shake-out was predicted.

The people who made these predictions were wrong: How many exciting, new roleplaying titles have appeared in the last seven years? I won't bother to list them (that's not the purpose of this editorial), but obviously, the industry is far from dead.

What's happening here is a definite cycle: Inspiration causes success. Success causes a flurry of less-inspired imitations. These dull the public interest in whatever genre is the target of opportunity, and soon somebody pronounces the genre "dead." Sooner or later, however, inspiration strikes again, and the cycle begins anew.

Right now we are into the middle stage of the cycle. Within two years, someone will again announce that no new games are possible—only permutations on old ones. My prediction is that this remark will be followed closely by the publication of a game opening up a new, extremely popular genre.

Loren K. Wiseman

Have any comments on this issue? How about gaming in general? Letters from our Readers provides gamers an opportunity to air their views. The opinions presented do not necessarily reflect those of the magazine. ***Challenge*** *reserves the right to edit letters. Write to* ***Challenge*** *Letters, Managing Editor, PO Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61702-1646 USA.*

GDW Announces New Staff Members

GDW and **Challenge** would like to welcome a few newcomers to their creative staff.

Nick Atlas, the new associate editor of **Challenge**, comes to GDW from Baltimore after a brief career with another game company. A chronic gamer, he's been playing roleplaying games almost all his life and doesn't plan to quit anytime soon. As associate editor, he will be working with Michelle Sturgeon in accepting and editing submissions for publication.

Kirk Wescom, a graduate of Illinois Wesleyan University with a bachelor of fine arts degree, is new (sort of) to our art department. Fans of the GDW credits pages will note that he was on our part-time staff about two years ago. The tail-end of his early work can be seen in **Infantry Weapons of the World**. Now he's back for good as a full-timer. His most recent GDW credits include **New Orleans** and **Sands of War**. In his free time he pursues sculpture and long-distance running.

Dave Nilsen, formerly a Waldenbooks manager, is another new addition to our editing department. He has been playing **Traveller** since 1977, and he will be greatly involved in the major storyline changes in the **Traveller** universe that will be coming your way later this year. Dave is also a naval history enthusiast, as evidenced by the fact that he persuaded his wife into letting him name their dogs and cats after battleships. He comes to us from Maryland, where there are hills.

Steve Maggi is a recent addition to our typesetting/proofreading department. He hails from Milwaukee, where he recently graduated from Marquette University with a degree in communications. Before joining GDW, he had worked at two radio stations, for a newspaper, and for a concert promoter.

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LIMA
INCIDENT
Paul T. Riegel

TWILIGHT: 2000

Hurry up and wait—isn't that always the story?

We had been recalled all the way from North Carolina, just to sit in this hot briefing room and wait for them to get their act together. After more than two hours of watching Civgov officials and the 228th's intelligence people running around in circles, I must have dozed off.

The next thing I knew, my buddy nudged me awake. Finally.

After all that wait, you'd think they'd at least let us in on what was going on, but the briefing was pretty uninformative.

What they told us was basically this: The 112th Medcom, stationed at Columbus, was coming out in support of the Civgov. But first, they needed our support to help them gain control over the situation in Ohio. They were suffering under the ravages of marauders, and the 194th Armored Brigade had been testing the state's borders with patrols.

Our mission was to escort some medical division officer back to Columbus, and give him and the 112th whatever aid we could. We were also to gather as much information as possible along the way and do a complete survey of the state.

Sounded pretty dull. But sometimes things don't turn out quite how you expect.

The 112th Medical Division recently learned that 30 M-1 Abrams MBTs are sitting outside the former General Motors Lima Tank Plant, in Lima, OH. Through a combination of luck and experience, Captain Peter Rice managed to pick his way from the 112th through southern Pennsylvania and northern West Virginia to Frederick, MD. There he was picked up by a military patrol, which turned him over to the CIA for questioning.

He reported that the Ohio government wants Civgov to secure the vehicles before Milgov can get them and destroy the Lima Constabulary in the process. Ohio officials are also seeking long-term help, in the form of the special operations group (SOG) to aid them in recovery and in breaking up marauders.

The PCs have been hired by Civgov to work as a semiautonomous special operations group. They're recalled from the middle of a survey mission in western North Carolina for a briefing by Major Sanders (the 228th's S-2 intelligence officer), James Watkins (their liaison with the CIA) and Captain Rice (the 112th's G-2 intelligence officer).

Rice carries two sealed orders for the leader of the group. The first orders the SOG to proceed to Lima and secure the tank plant. The adventurers are to radio Frederick with the number of M01s in operational condition, then hold them until tank transporters arrive from Frederick. The second set of orders, to be revealed upon completion of the first mission, assigns the SOG to temporary service to the governor of Ohio.

Weapons: One vehicle may have an M-60 LMG mount, and an M-203 grenade launcher with six rounds of ammunition is available. PCs will be provided a single pistol and rifle of their choice. They may also select a sniper rifle and either two Armbursts or two M72 LAWs.

PCs will be allowed 300 rounds of ammunition per weapon, 100 rounds only for rare weapons. They should be given the option of four grenades, plus a thermite grenade for the code books and the speech security equipment. Also, they should receive a Claymore and two trip flares per vehicle.

Vehicles: The adventurers may select any unarmored, unarmed cargo vehicle, one per two persons maximum. Also, they may have one trailer per vehicle, of which one may be a tank trailer, filled halfway with methyl alcohol.

Equipment: Each person is issued three sets of battle dress, a set of combat webbing, Alice pack, nylon ballistic helmet, Kevlar body armor, knife/bayonet, sleeping bag, shelter half, personal medical kit, gas mask and chemical defense unit. PCs are also issued a 5/25-kilometer vehicle radio, RC-292 antenna, five-kilowatt generator and up to a medium still. They receive one pair of binoculars for every second vehicle and may take a 25× image intensifier. They have a doctors' kit, half-filled drug kit and geiger counter. Additional equipment should be provided as the referee sees fit.

GETTING TO OHIO

Three basic routes to Ohio are still viable—I-70 through Pennsylvania, US-40 through Pennsylvania and I-77 through West Virginia.

I-70 and US-40: Obstacles for I-70 and US-40 are covered in **Allegheny Uprising**. There are still several large and powerful marauder bands in western Pennsylvania, although they are more scattered than before.

I-77: The I-77 route involves the group proceeding southwest into Virginia, then north through West Virginia. Some of the territory near Frederick in the same general direction of travel is set forth in the **Kidnapped** module. I-77 should be very quiet until the party reaches the vicinity of Charleston, WV. There they will meet Jameyson's Irregulars.

Ohio River: Most of the bridges across the Ohio River are either unsafe or totally demolished. Each river town will have a limited ferry service, for a price, but nothing large enough for a vehicle.

There are useable bridges at Wheeling, Portsmouth and Cincinnati. In addition, a large ferry is operating at Marietta, run by the River People. The Wheeling bridges are controlled by the 275th Military Police Battalion. The Portsmouth bridge, incapable—due to damage—of supporting anything over five tons, is controlled by the Ohio Defense Corps. The Cincinnati bridge is controlled by a marauder group calling itself the Cincinnati Pirates.

Lima: The first obstacle on the way to Lima is attempting to avoid the patrols of the 194th Armored Brigade. The 194th is constantly putting out long-range patrols, testing the response of the Ohio military, and it is always interested in seeing PCs' reactions to its presence. I have usually placed an M113A5 with a thrown track on the main route that the PCs are taking, and consequently the crew and an ARV attempting to fix it.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Ohio is divided into a series of fortified enclaves, similar to fire bases in Vietnam, controlling various population centers or key positions. These are

operated and controlled by various Ohio National Guard and Ohio Military Reserve units still loyal to the governor. From these positions, the various units attempt to control the surrounding territory via patrols and friendly contact with inhabitants.

Much of the state is not controlled by the state's enclaves. It is inhabited by small bands of farmers, hunters and refugees from all over. In addition, there are several active marauder groups, both former national guard and civilian. The largest of these numbers nearly 500 and operates in northern Ohio, southern Michigan, and northern Indiana. Most of the groups, however, are much smaller in both size and area of operation.

Chillicothe, Washington Court House and Circleville Camps: These are among the best developed of the camps under state control, having been among the early camps to be built. The camps are large. They are gaining population faster than most, but order has been maintained.

The camps are under their own control and have been heavily fortified over the last few months. Patrols are nonexistent, but a well-established militia has come into being. There are 10 trained soldiers in the camps, along with another 125 full-time militiamen.

Cincinnati: This city, once the "Queen City of the Ohio River," now lies sacked and nearly deserted. The only inhabitants are scavengers and those under control of the Cincinnati Pirates, a group of marauders which has taken over the bridges and occupied the riverfront areas of the city. The marauders have established a river toll and a river crossing tax, enforced by 60-80 men headquartered at several fortified areas. In addition, they have managed to obtain an M-47 Dragon and several rounds of ammunition.

Columbus: Columbus is the largest of the enclaves still controlled by the state government. It is actually four interconnected camps, as the center of the city has been given up to scavengers. The largest of these refugee camps is in the Dublin-Hilliard corridor, just northwest of the city. The second is in the Reynoldsburg-Pataskala area. The others are at Grove City and Westerville-Sunbury. The situation in Columbus is stable, and the camps have been fortified. They mount patrols, both out of Columbus and into the city proper, and have regular messenger service with Lancaster.

The senior unit in Columbus is the 112th Medcom Headquarters. It has 160 trained soldiers in four firebases, along with 250 full-time militia and 450 emergency militia.

Coshocton: This small, independent community has constructed its own fortifications. It has a well-established agriculture base, with a universal military conscription for all members of the community between the ages of 16 and 60. They are equipped with a wide variety of paramilitary and civilian arms, and are extremely leery of all strangers.

Defiance: Now known as Fort Defiance, this town is the home of 1st Section, A Company, 194th Armored Brigade. This is a recon group of A Company dispatched to Detroit to gain spare parts for the 194th's vehicles. They were ambushed and withdrew to Defiance awaiting support, which is yet to come. They have 26 soldiers, 20 recruits, one M113A5, one FS HMMWV and four HMMWVs. They are loyal to the Milgov, and they mount extensive patrols through out their areas of operation.

Findlay, Fostoria and Tiffin Camps: This group of camps was hastily set up to help the refugees from the Toledo and Lima nuclear attacks. Thus, they lacked all the basic necessities and facilities. The state had no unit to send to aid the new camps, so they relied upon local police forces and governments to keep order. The plan failed miserably, and the half-trained, ill-equipped, 2nd Infantry Battalion, OMR was committed to suppress the rioting and restore order. They quickly learned how to rule through intimidation and force, and their efforts resulted in 34 deaths. The camps have improved slightly since then and have been extensively fortified.

The 2nd Infantry Battalion, OMR has 55 trained soldiers and about 60 full-time militiamen. They mount no exterior patrols after dark and have become extensively raided.

Irontown: This town was devastated by a nuclear missile which hit across the Ohio River at Catlettsburg, KY.

Lancaster, Logan, Nelsonville and Athens Camps: This corridor, located along Route 33, consists of a series of state-controlled camps centered around the named communities. They are heavily fortified, and the areas surrounding them are extensively patrolled. Almost the entire population is involved in the agriculture system. The camps are expanding daily to meet the influx of refugees sent there from Columbus.

The area is controlled by the 224th Air Defense Artillery Battalion and its 56 soldiers. The camps also have about 200 full-time militiamen, with six operational M-42 Duster antiaircraft vehicles and a Redeye SAM launcher.

Lima: The city was extensively damaged by a nuclear strike. Those areas not affected are controlled by the Lima Constabulary—a group of escaped convicts, led by Bruce Alexander. They have gained control of the Lima Tank Plant, but no one knows the value of what they hold. They have about 35 experienced men and small arms, mostly shotguns, pistols and some CAR-15s. Their headquarters is about three buildings down from the Lima Tank Plant, and they use the plant's water tower for an observation point.

Marietta: This town was deserted after Irontown was devastated, and it has never officially been repopulated. Recently a group calling itself the River People has moved into the city to scavenge and gain shelter.

The River People have proved to be hostile to all strangers and have attacked individuals, Ohio military patrols and marauder raiders. They have built up a defensive position along the Ohio River and patrol their territory using an old converted river tug.

The River People consist of about 30 trained soldiers and 75 trained militiamen—deserters, survivalists and people attracted to the area's seeming tranquility.

Marion, Bucyrus and Upper Sandusky Group: These towns represent the largest independent force in the state, trading with Cleveland, Columbus, and WPAFB. These towns are extensively overcrowded and have new facilities under construction. The camps have about 20 trained soldiers, 60 full-time militiamen and 130 part-time militiamen.

Marysville, Bellfontaine and Kenton Camps: This group of camps was among the last established. They have

subsequently been abandoned by the state and are only controlled by their own local militias and police forces.

They have 15 trained soldiers, 70 full-time militiamen, and 125 part-time militiamen. In addition, they have four M-35 2.5-ton cargo trucks and five M151 jeeps.

Portsmouth: This river town and camp are controlled by the Ohio Defense Corps and A Company, 3rd Military Police Group, OMR. It has been the site of numerous raids from groups such as Jameyson's Irregulars and the Kentucky Mountainmen. Even though hurt by the raids, the residents have done quite well.

The town is heavily fortified on all sides and is defended by 60 trained soldiers, 100 full-time militiamen and 160 part-time militiamen.

Toledo: This town was devastated by the nuclear strike against the oil fields and refineries to the west of the city, and by the subsequent fallout. It is now only occupied by handfuls of scavengers and thugs.

Waverly and Lucasville Camps: This group was established to control the Ohio Correctional Facility at Lucasville and escalated into a major penal colony. Law and order are maintained by the heavy hand of the 3rd Military Police Group, OMR (minus one company at Portsmouth).

The 3rd MP Group has established a heavily fortified camp at Waverly and a large prisoner compound at Lucasville at the site of the Ohio Correctional Facility. It has 80 trained soldiers (and former corrections officers), plus 100 full-time militia.

Wheeling, WV: Wheeling falls under this area by virtue of the presence of A Company, 275th Military Police Battalion. The city is only occupied by a small number of scavengers, and the lone remaining bridge is heavily fortified.

The MP company has 53 men.

Zanesville, McConnelsville and Cambridge Camps: This is a series of state-controlled camps incorporating the communities listed. The camps are massively overcrowded, and living conditions are among the worst in the state.

The camps are controlled by the 2nd Military Police Group, OMR, but it is so understrength that external patrols are impossible. Most of the 70 trained soldiers and 85 full-time militiamen spend their time maintaining control over the camps. The camps are yet to be fortified and are prime targets for river raiders and even Jameyson's Irregulars.

DESTINATION: LIMA

Lima was half destroyed by the blast that hit just to the southwest of the city. With most of the city in rubble and much of it uninhabitable due to radiation, the scavengers and thieves operate out of the northeast corner of the city, where the tank plant is located. The Lima Tank Plant consists of several large buildings, one housing the assembly line, one housing administrative offices and one housing a substantial foundry. In addition, behind the facility is a large parking lot (to house vehicles until they are shipped out), a railroad spur (to ship the vehicles out on) and several driving ranges.

Defenses: Members of the Lima Constabulary will defend the plant against intruders. They have an observation point on the watertower, with foot patrols of two or four men out at any time. The headquarters will house only a maximum of 10 people at any time. Members are likely to put up a good fight initially, but they will break and run quickly if the fighting becomes too intense or too close.

The constabulary has only two half-kilometer hand radios, one at the headquarters and one kept by Bruce Alexander. He does not stay at the headquarters at any time. The group has no heavy equipment except for a handful of tear gas grenades.

Findings: The 30 M-1s reported turn out to be three operational M-1s, and only one has complete armament.

If the PCs check inside the plant carefully (the tanks are parked out back) they will find that the building has hardly been touched by vandals. The tools and dies are more valuable than the tanks themselves, as they could be used to make more tanks.

When they have completed the mission, the adventurers will receive the second set of sealed orders. Now comes the interesting choice: Will the PCs keep the tank and go marauder, call for the transporter and give it up to the Civgov, or take it and join the Milgov and the 194th?

PERSONALITIES

Bruce Alexander: Alexander was confined to the Lima Correctional Institution, serving 50 to life for the murders of several minority students in his dorm,

TWILIGHT: 2000

when he led the breakout from the facility. Before the war he was a member of the Arayan Youth and Skinhead movements, and embraced the ideas of New America. Alexander is a short, stocky, man with dark hair.

Club King: He is a brutal man. *Club Jack:* He is perfectly comfortable with murder as a way to achieve his goals.

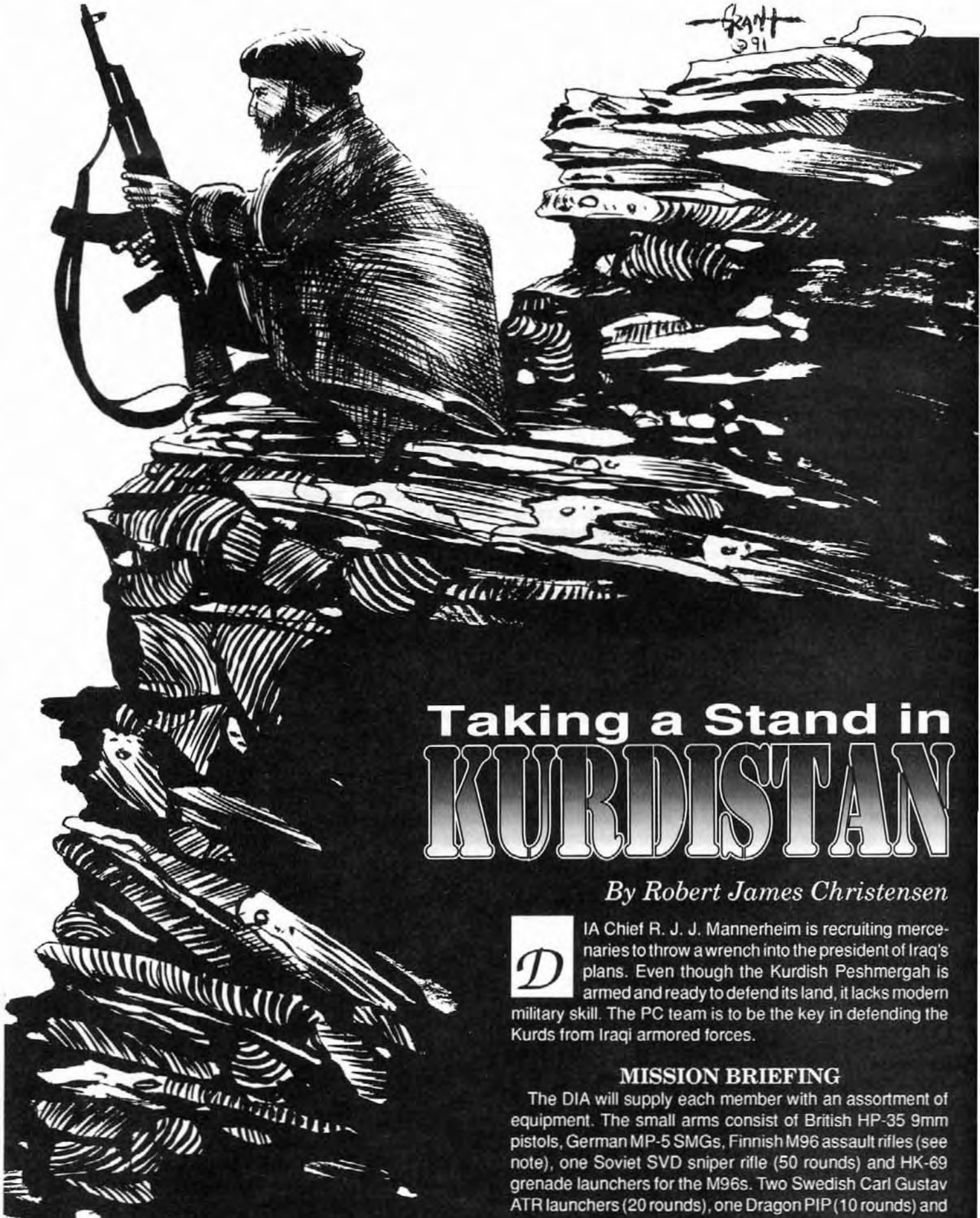
Kevin Jameyson: Jameyson was a sales clerk in Charlestron, WV before the war. When the war started, he attempted to enlist but was rejected from service due to a felony conviction for assault. When the bombs started falling, the shortages started getting bad and rush of refugees hit, he decided to do something. He took up arms against the refugees and anyone strange to his town. He enlisted the help of all who would swear allegiance to him, including many former criminals. Fight they did, with good success, and thus Jameyson's Irregulars was formed. Jameyson is a young man, tall and lanky, with curly blond hair.

Diamond King: Jameyson tends to set himself above others. *Club Eight:* He has a tendency to use violence to solve disputes.

Captain Peter Rice: Rice is the G-2 intelligence officer of the 112th Medical Command. He served with the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment at the start of the war, but he was wounded and returned to the US. When he was released from the hospital, he was assigned to the 112th Medcom.

Heart 10: He has an intense loyalty to his mission. *Heart Jack:* He is an excellent tactician and has a great working knowledge of weapons systems and military science.

Just because Rice is with the party does not give the PCs access to any information beyond that in the briefing,. He is a very quiet, tight-lipped individual. Also, Rice does not ensure that the adventurers will be readily accepted into the various camps. The groups may still be considered hostile until his identity can be verified. Ω



Taking a Stand in KURDISTAN

By Robert James Christensen

DIA Chief R. J. J. Mannerheim is recruiting mercenaries to throw a wrench into the president of Iraq's plans. Even though the Kurdish Peshmergah is armed and ready to defend its land, it lacks modern military skill. The PC team is to be the key in defending the Kurds from Iraqi armored forces.

MISSION BRIEFING

The DIA will supply each member with an assortment of equipment. The small arms consist of British HP-35 9mm pistols, German MP-5 SMGs, Finnish M96 assault rifles (see note), one Soviet SVD sniper rifle (50 rounds) and HK-69 grenade launchers for the M96s. Two Swedish Carl Gustav ATR launchers (20 rounds), one Dragon PIP (10 rounds) and

10 Stinger missiles are included with two 25× image intensifiers and a starlight scope.

The non-US-issued gear allows the team to avoid any evidence that this is an American operation and allows the use of captured material.

Personal ammunition will be 60 rounds of 9mm, 120 rounds of 5.45mm and 10 40mm HEDP grenades.

Personal equipment will be US basic loads, an individual tactical radio, personal med kit, water purifier, IR goggles and 15 days of MRE.

Transport consists of one or two Land Rovers with a Soviet PK MMG (two 50-round belts) and a 50-kilometer secure vehicle radio.

The DIA does expect to collect any unused equipment and will pass out any captured Iraqi equipment to the Peshmergah.

The PCs are to be paid $5000 each up front and $35,000 upon successful completion of this mission.

APPROACH

The team will be inserted into Kurdistan 20 kilometers west of Dahuk, where two Iraqi armored divisions are believed to be preparing their attack, using their remaining T-72s, T-64s and various APCs in a five-mile front along the Tigris River Mosul. The majority of the enemy infantry will be truckborne or on foot. The Kurds, armed with AKs, PKs and antitank rockets, will be defending against infantry nearing their population centers, and the PCs must prevent the armored forces from entering the fray. The team will have to be on the lookout for Iraqi ground attack aircraft, which will either be helicopter gunships or aging attack bombers.

The land the team will be defending is mostly empty rolling hills punctuated by rocky crags. The Tigris flows through a typical river valley, with scattered groves of trees and brush. The weather is chilly and wet. The main highway is four lanes of cracking concrete, and all other roads are roughly paved.

RETRIEVAL

Only if electronic intelligence determines that the Iraqis have been sufficiently neutralized will the team be contacted for extraction by an HC-150 Pave Low helicopter.

REFEREEING THE SCENARIO

The Iraqis are expecting to use their vastly superior firepower to overwhelm the rebels by brute force and by scaring the Kurdish civilians back into the hills. Their forces are a broad mix of Iraqi troops, ranging from elite Republican Guards, regular army units, and People's Divisions (draftees just off the street). Iraqi personnel are 30% Veteran, 50% Experienced and 20% Novice.

The equipment the Iraqis have includes AKMs, PKs and Makarovs. Vehicles are T-72, T-64s, T-55s, an occasional Chieftain, BTRs, BDMs and lots of trucks. There will also be several Hind gunships and aging MiG-23, SU-20 or SU-26 ground-attack jets to provide additional firepower.

The remains of the Iraqi Tactical Air Force will have two missions: Helicopter gunships will attack rebel positions, and jet bombers will harass fleeing refugees. They are not expecting any resistance, and heavy losses from Stingers will effectively ground the air attack. As for the ground attack against the Kurds, the Iraqis, not expecting any kind of heavy antitank fire (other then captured RPG-7s), will retreat if hit hard. There are enough veterans of the Desert Storm massacres to cause unit mutinies if causalities mount.

TWILIGHT: 2000

Due to the covert nature of the mission, the team cannot expect extraction until the mission is accomplished. Escaping to Turkey, Syria and Iran would be very difficult. The only other outcomes for the PCs are to be captured by the Iraqis and shot, or to be caught by border guards and be jailed for 20 years.

NPCs

R.J.J. Mannerheim: Mannerheim is the DIA agent in charge of Middle Eastern affairs. He served in Northern Iraq from 1991-1995 and has a great rapport with the Kurds. He has already supplied them with military, medical and manufacturing supplies, along with valued intelligence on the president of Iraq's moves. He has already shipped 50 Stinger missiles and 90 M72 LAWs to the Kurds.

He knows that what he is doing is illegal, but he sees it as his moral duty. If not already tied to Washington, he would fight alongside the Kurds, and would rather commit suicide then betray the team and his Kurdish friends.

Mannerheim is a trim and athletic man with a studious face with dark and hair and mustache, both tinged with gray.

Motivations: Honorable, moderately sociable.

Rashad Mommat: Wily Kurdish leader and old friend of Mannerheim from Operation "Give Comfort." He is personable to any ally, while just as vicious to his enemies, particularly the president of Iraq's forces, who have in the last 20 years killed 40 members of his huge family. He is very contemptible of the United States government, but his friendship with Mannerheim and other American individuals transcends this antipathy.

Motivations: War leader, charismatic.

Init: 5.

Skills: CRM-9, Recon-8, MC-6, Horsemanship-6, BC-5, FO-4, HW-4.

Cpl "Slim" Stanz: Sociopath ex-army sniper included on the team. He takes delight in hitting "targets" and gleefully nocks his rifle with each kill (88 so far). He is a loner, preferring to talk to himself, but follows orders quite well.

Stanz is a dark, unkempt young man with an ever-present sinister grin, resembling a redneck jack o' lantern.

Motivation: Murderous, somewhat ambitious.

Skills: CRM-9, HB-7, MC-6, Recon-5, Gunsmith-5, Forage-4. Ω

Note: *The M96 assault rifle is Scandinavian full auto version of the M71, equipped with night sights and a small laser range finder.* ROF: *5* Dam: *3* Pen: *2-1-Nil* Blk: *5* Rng: *70.*

Solve the mystery of the vanishing refugees.

Coventry

By Greg Videll

Coventry opens sometime in 1121 in the Westminster/Lagaar (2009 Zarushagar) system. The characters are travelling to Westminster aboard their own starship for their own purposes. A few hours after they enter the Westminster system, they receive a priority communication from System Traffic Control. STC has received a distress call from the yacht *Silver Star,* the marquis of Fema's personal ship. Damaged by commerce raiders at its point of origin, the *Silver Star* made it through jump, but its situation is now critical. Power is out; life support is failing; and the yacht is headed toward a fiery reentry in the planet's atmosphere.

STC orders the PCs' ship to render any aid possible. Failure to comply carries with with it massive fines, extended jail terms and seizure of the ship. System patrol craft are on the way, but any rescue is up to the characters.

RESCUE

The referee should generate tasks as needed to cover the intercept and boarding of the stricken yacht. Any attempt to physically move the yacht onto a new vector is highly dangerous and will almost certainly result in the PCs' ship being damaged. As an added complication, the yacht is slowly tumbling, making any attempt to match airlocks more difficult.

The PCs will be met at the airlock by Cassimir Pak, the marquis of Fema. Dressed in grimy ship's coveralls, the noble will quickly put the PCs to work. They can either assist in repairing the ship's power plant or in preparing an evacuation. (Repair of the power plant is a long shot, but still a possibility.) Pak is a hard charger with a good head on his shoulders and no illusions that his social station excludes him from hard work. He will coordinate the evacuation of the wounded (there are several) and then save whatever important items he needs to effectively carry out his duties. He will be the next to last to leave the dying ship. (The captain, following ancient naval tradition, will be the last out.)

As the PCs' ship clears the yacht, system patrol craft will arrive, declare the *Silver Star* beyond salvage and destroy it with a missile barrage.

The remainder of the trip to the groundport is uneventful. Once they've landed, both crews can expect to be mobbed by the local media interested in the spectacular rescue.

MEETING WITH PAK

The following day, the characters are invited to the marquis' suite atop the plushest hotel in the capital city of Coventry. After everyone gets comfortable, the noble will inquire about the PCs' recent travels and discuss his efforts at rebuilding the subsector. Pak was impressed with the characters' performance yesterday and asks if they'd consider doing a small job for him.

The marquis arrived at Westminster with little time to prepare for an important meeting of the local peerage which is scheduled for next week. (He had planned to work during the trip.) In the interim, he must make up for lost time while also meeting with nobles from across the region that falls under his noble purview, the County Citenic (which includes Westminster).

Pak was scheduled to tour a refugee camp on the outskirts of Coventry, but will now be unable to do so. The welfare of the refugees is very important to the marquis. He'd like the characters to conduct an inspection and report back to him. Pak is interested in such details as health care, quality and quantity of food, sanitation and the like. He also wants the characters to randomly interview a few of the refugees in order to gain a personal view of life in the camp. The marquis is willing to pay a generous fee for the inspection, which he expects should take no more than a day or two. (The exact fee should be set by the referee in keeping with the PCs' wants and needs.)

CAMP COVENTRY

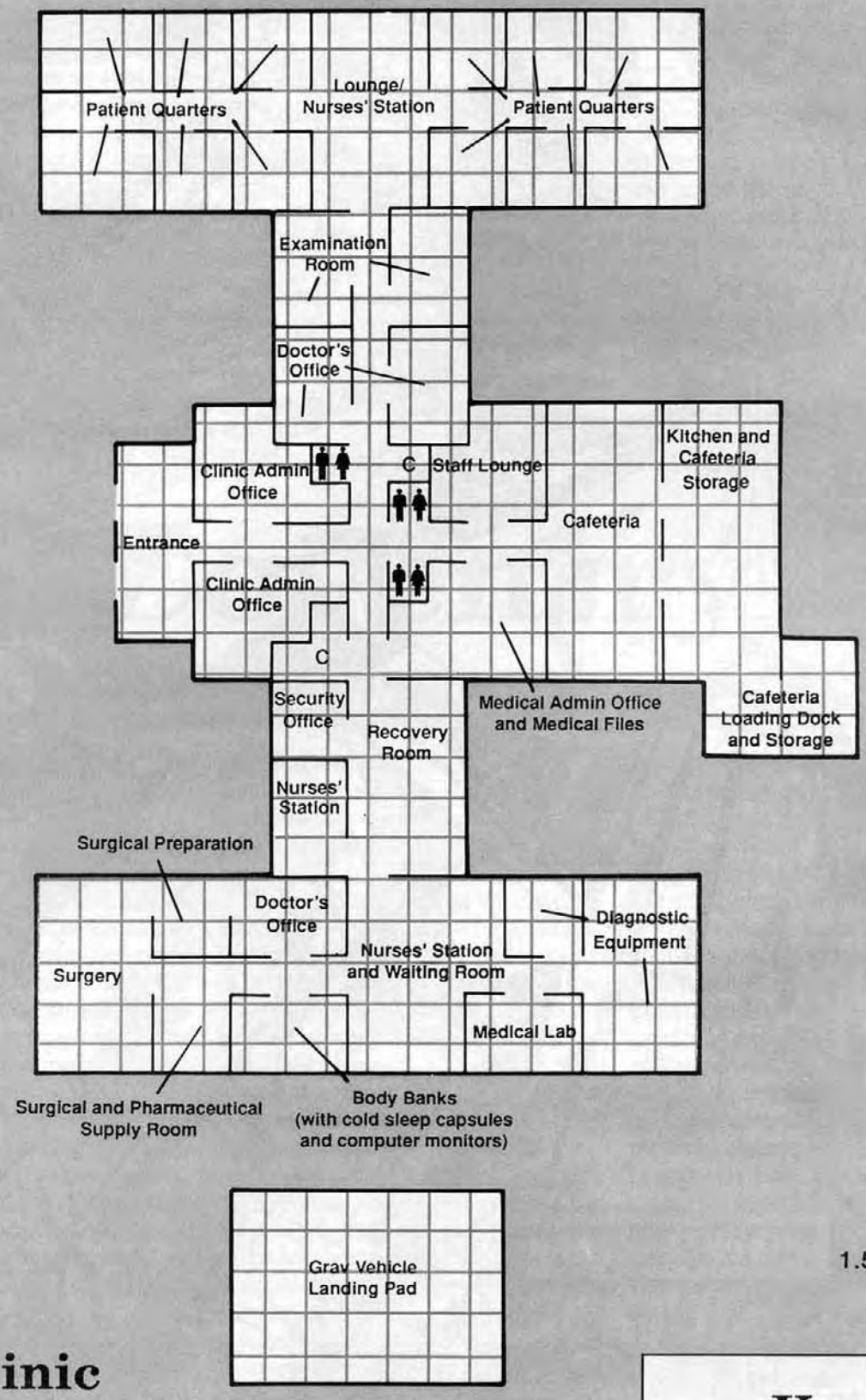
The next morning, the PCs are transported via air/raft to the refugee camp, nicknamed Camp Coventry. The camp is situated in a partially razed housing project on the edge of the capital city. Westminster authorities had planned to build a starport expansion on the site to upgrade it to class A status, but the Rebellion put paid to the plan. Now it is occupied by some 5000 refugees who have fled from various worlds to spinward.

The camp is a random collection of permanent, semi-permanent and temporary shelters—in effect, a tent city among urban ruins. Local authorities have set up a field hospital, and medical care is quite good. Every incoming refugee goes through a complete medical screening and receives appropriate treatment. Housing takes the form of portable shelters from Scout Service Exploration Branch stocks. (With the ongoing conflict, that branch has little need for them at the present.) Food is in abundant supply, but consists almost exclusively of stockpiled military rations. (Rather drab and not a lot of variety.) Sanitation, as can be expected, consists of fusion stills which fuel portable fusion generators. Civic, religious and charitable organizations from across the county have provided clothing and other amenities to make life a little easier.

On the surface, life in the camp appears pretty good given the circumstances. It's during the personal interviews that the PCs will get a better feeling for the mood in Camp Coventry.

The Westminsters, or Minsters, have little use for refugees, and they've made their feelings clear. The locals are concerned about an increase in the crime rate (almost nonexistent now), disease (virtually impossible given the medical screening process) or loss of the few remaining jobs on-planet to the refugees. The refugees for their part just want a place to call home and resent





Clinic

The clinic offers a wide range of medical services to Westminster's more well-to-do citizens and is secretly owned by the Ashrikaan Tong crime syndicate.

Few of the patients or staff are aware of this connection.

the locals' attitude. Needless to say, there's a strong undercurrent of tension in the camp.

Not all Minsters, including most of the camp administration, are against the refugees. Some are quite sympathetic, as they can picture themselves in a similar situation.

For the protection of the internees, to prevent incidents with the locals and to locate a specific person when needed, each refugee wears a locator on his wrist. Each locator transmits a separate, unique code. A ring of receivers around the camp monitors the location of each person and can display such information graphically.

The marquis is aware of the situation in the camp as it has been repeated on other worlds in the county. He had to prod the Minsters into action, but once they got to work, they became highly efficient. Pak hopes that during the meeting with the peerage, he can push through measures needed to put the refugee problem to rest.

IN PERSON

Despite the tension, Camp Coventry appears to be a safe haven for refugees. That is until the characters meet a young woman by the name of Sophren Jopphar.

Jopphar will tell the PCs that refugees have been mysteriously disappearing from the camp during the last year. She has uncovered five instances in which individuals have vanished without a trace—the most recent case involved a personal friend. Camp authorities claim that these people never existed because there's no computer record of them. But other camp residents remember the missing persons, though none know where they went. Piecing things together on her own, Jopphar has come up with the following facts:

- All those who disappeared were adults in excellent physical shape.
- All came into the camp alone—not accompanied by friends or family.
- All disappeared at night during or around a rainy period in the local weather control schedule.
- None left the camp, according to the locator receivers.
- All physical hazards in the housing ruins are clearly marked and barricaded.

Jopphar asks the characters for their, and the marquis', assistance in finding out the truth about the disappearances. She's worried that relations between the refugees and the Minsters have gone from bad to worse and that some sort of hate group is responsible. Jopphar will also mention a rumor generated by some of the more superstitious residents of the camp. They believe some supernatural force to be the culprit. Jopphar denies believing this theory but is not entirely convincing in her denial.

TONG

The agency responsible for the disappearances is far from supernatural. The Ashrikaan Tong, a criminal syndicate active throughout this region of the sector, has been kidnapping refugees and rendering them down for "spare parts"—in other words, "organlegging."

It's been said that "if it's illegal, the Tong deals in it." Case in point, production and distribution of anagathics in the subsector has suffered because of the war. To make up for this lack, the syndicate has offered certain individuals of no small wealth and few morals a medical rather than chemical means to preserve their youth. The syndicate is selling replacement organs and the like using the refugees from Camp Coventry as the source. After all, no one would miss a few refugees, and even if someone did, there's little anyone could do about it while confined to the camp.

Setting up the organlegging operation was relatively simple given the Tong's resources. The group bought a low-level admin clerk at the camp and instructed him to scan all incoming refugee medical files, which include such information as tissue rejection factors and family status. When one with certain desired parameters shows up, the clerk makes a call to an unlisted number and turns over the refugee's locator code to the voice at the other end. At Cr2000 a head, the Tong pays next to nothing for the information, considering that the total profit from one individual can range into the millions of credits.

Under the cover of inclement weather and when the victim is alone, an air/raft slips into the camp, and the person is abducted. The refugee is flown to a private medical clinic, where a Tong doctor "breaks down the merchandise." Because of the amount of useable material (organs, limbs, skin and so on) taken from each victim, the kidnapings are spaced sufficiently well apart to hold down the number of disappearances while keeping the Tong's body bank filled. After the refugee has been snatched, the clerk erases that person's file, which includes the locator code: To the camp administration, that person ceases to exist.

LEGWORK

The PCs can take any number of courses of action to resolve the mystery. By closely questioning Jopphar, they can determine that she is telling what she believes is the truth. In addition, with some slight differences accounted for by individual perception, the information Jopphar has assembled will be echoed in the remarks of other refugees. Consulting with the camp administrators will yield nothing as they don't believe the missing refugees ever existed. They're likely to question Jopphar's sanity or chalk it up to superstition. Furthermore, the Minsters don't particularly appreciate outsiders nosing around in their business—but in deference to the marquis' authority, they will cooperate.

The real break in the character's investigation will come when they report back to Pak. Several months ago, the marquis obtained a bootleg copy of the camp roster. (Once again, the Minsters are sensitive about off-worlders looking over their shoulders.) A computer search and abstraction of the roster will reveal some very interesting data.

- The roster contains information on three of the five missing refugees (including Jopphar's friend).
- In comparing the files of the three missing persons, the fact that they were all excellent organ donors may come to light. (If possible, this conclusion should be reached via roleplaying and not through a task roll. This should make for more satisfying play.)

Once the characters come to the correct conclusion, Pak will put a priority on tracking down the responsible

parties. Organlegging is a high justice crime, which means it falls within Pak's jurisdiction. The marquis, true to his obligation as a noble, will not rest until those responsible are brought to justice.

TRAPPING THE TONG

Pak will be unable to directly assist the characters due to his on-going work with the peerage, but he will put all his resources at their disposal. Sergeant Major Symers, Pak's majordomo and chief bodyguard, will act as the PCs' point of contact.

The remainder of the adventure deals with one possible plan of attack as suggested by the sergeant major. The PCs are encouraged to formulate alternate plans.

Symers' plan is as follows: One or more characters, under suitable cover identities, will be admitted to the camp as in-coming refugees. False medical information will be inserted into the camp computer which makes one of the PCs look like an extraordinary "donor" candidate—one too good to pass up. (One of Pak's retinue is responsible for managing the marquis' communications and computer databases when he travels. She also is an expert in database intrusion and will use her skills to supply the cover identities and alter the medical records.)

With a rainy period coming up in the local weather program, the conditions are right for the candidate character to be abducted.

The goal of the mission is to track the perpetrators back to their base and arrest those involved.

Symers will bring along one or two of Pak's retainers to back up the characters. But given the number of retainers who must stay in proximity to the marquis or who are recovering from injuries incurred aboard the yacht, the brunt of the mission falls on the characters.

This mission is to be kept as quiet as possible. No one knows for sure if local law enforcement is in on the kidnapping scheme, but Pak wants to take no chances. Furthermore, the noble isn't the type to just turn this over to the local authorities; Pak feels responsible for getting the job done right—and that means by his people (the characters included).

THE GRAB

Getting the PCs settled in the camp should present no unusual problems other than possibly running into someone they talked to during their inspection tour. Such an encounter should amount to no more than a tense moment. One of the characters' first priorities should be to set up surveillance on the target character and coordinate with Symers' team (which can be accomplished via coded hand computer communications). Next, a tense waiting period ensues, during which the referee can insert various red herrings as desired.

On the night in question, a Tong air/raft flying a nap of the earth approach will enter the camp. Aboard are two syndicate agents as described below. They will tranquilize the target PC using their snub pistols and haul him to their vehicle. Detection avoidance and shadowing tasks for the PCs following in Symers' air/raft may be generated by the referee.

The air/raft will take a meandering route around Coventry before popping up into the local air traffic control net (which is manual, not automated). If necessary, the referee should generate a sketch map of Coventry and its environs for PC use. Alternatively, any city map taken from a standard road atlas, suitably modified by the referee, can be employed.

The kidnapper's vehicle will eventually settle down on a private landing pad in an up-scale neighborhood. The PCs, along with Symers' team, will have to find a landing site nearby. The Tong agents will put up a fight for as long as possible before attempting to flee. The clinic staff will initially be too confused to do anything constructive and will then flee the grounds by any means possible. There are currently a handful of patients and about a dozen staff members on the premises. The exact number of syndicate agents should be proportional to the number of PCs.

To provide a satisfactory climax to the adventure, the PCs should succeed in capturing the more important Tong members at the clinic. If things get too far out of hand or if the PCs move too slowly, local enforcers can be brought in. They'll arrest the whole bunch and later release the marquis' personnel, including the characters, upon learning their identities. To clean up all the loose ends, Pak's computer expert can also finger the camp clerk by back tracking computer audit trails. In any case, the authorities will have to be brought in to take custody of the Tong prisoners.

RESOLUTION

The conclusion of "Coventry" provides an opportunity for air/raft chases, firefights and the last-minute saves necessary to end the adventure on a high note. Having twice aided the marquis with distinction, the characters will be approached by Pak and offered a permanent position on his staff. If they decline, they will have gained the friendship and respect of an important noble. If they accept, they can expect many more adventures in the service of the marquis of Fema.

NPCs

The following NPC descriptions may be useful in this adventure. For noble retainer, refugee, Tong agent and clinic staff extras use the quick NPC system from the **Referee's Manual.**

Baron Cassimir Pak, Marquis of Fema

Former marine force commander, noble.

86ABBD. Age 42.

Leader-3, Admin-2, Handgun-2, Liaison-2, Persuasion-2, Combat Rifleman-1, Computer-1, Grav Vehicle-1, Lrg. Blade-1, Stealth-1, Streetwise-1, Tactics-1, Vacc Suit-1.

In accordance with family tradition, Pak was required to serve in the Imperial military before assuming his duties as Baron Femat. Femat is the capital of the planet Fema (2210 Zarushagar).

While most nobles would have picked the navy, Pak served in the marines. There he found a lifestyle which best fit his personality—hard charging, vigorous and not afraid to take risks to get the job done.

After leaving the marines, Pak inherited his barony from his father and started his life as a high noble. When the Rebellion came along, the elder Pak couldn't adjust to the new political climate. He passed the marquisate on to his son and then retired. Pak applied what he learned in the marines about leading under pressure to guide Fema through the Rebellion.

Today, with many patents in the subsector going unfilled, Pak is in line to become the count of Citenic and already acts in that capacity at the behest of Lucan's Imperium. (When he will actually be confirmed to the position remains in question.) Pak's basic motivation is to serve the subjects of his fief to the best of his abilities.

Unfortunately, there are those who take offense at the marquis' de facto status as count and his relative youth. There's been no small amount of political infighting and intrigue as a result. With the conclusion of this adventure, there'll also be the Ashrikaan Tong to worry about. Considering the overall shape the subsector is in following the intense fighting in the region, Pak has his work cut out for him.

Sergeant Major Symers

Former marine sergeant major, noble retainer.

878998. Age 42.

Brawling-2, Combat Rifleman-2, Handgun-2, Leader-2, Stealth-2, Computer-1, Forgery-1, Grav Vehicle-1, Intrusion-1, Large Blade-1, Steward-1, Streetwise-1.

Symers met Pak in the marines and was his unit senior NCO. When it came time for Pak to assume his barony, Symers went with him and became the first of his personal retainers. As chief of Pak's staff, the sergeant major fills the combined roles of majordomo, bodyguard and chief troubleshooter. One of Symers' major concerns is his boss' insistence on accompanying his men on some of their more dangerous assignments. He knows that the marquis has never been the type to lead from behind, but he worries about the noble's welfare.

In private, the two are on a first-name basis, and Pak greatly respects the sergeant major's opinions. They continue to enjoy the same excellent working relationship they had in the marines. In fact, they share one of the same hobbies—cutlass fencing. (Some say that they were the only two marines to ever enjoy that part of their training.)

Sophren Jopphar

767786. Age 31.

Computer-2, Admin-1, Liaison-1, Brawl-0, Grav Vehicle-0.

Jopphar is a former executive in a furniture rental company.

Camp Administrator

467897. Age 35.

Admin-3, Comp-2, Liaison-0.

The administrator is not a martinet—she just wants to impose some order on what she sees as a chaotic universe.

Tong Kidnapper 1

878787. Age 28.

Air/Raft, Snub Pistol (with tranq loads).

Air/Raft-2, Handgun-2, Brawl-1, Stealth-1.

Tong Kidnapper 2

789677. Age 26.

Snub Pistol (with tranq loads), knife.

Brawl-2, Stealth-2, Handgun-1.

LIBRARY DATA

Westminster: Westminster/Lagaar (2009 Zarushagar) UWP: B565621-D Ni 404Na M1V *Diameter:* 8167 kilometers *Density:* 1.06 *Mass:* 0.258 *Gravity:* 0.66 *Orbital Period:* 46 days, 16 hours, 48 minutes *Rotation Period:* 31 hours, 10 minutes *Tilt:* 24° *Eccentricity:* 0.020 *Atmospheric Pressure:* 0.8 atmospheres (nitrogen/oxygen mix) *Hydrographic Percentage:* 50% (water) *Base Temperature:* 49.9° C *Population (as of 1110):* 4,434,241. Native life present.

County Citenic: The "fief" of the count of Citenic. County Citenic includes Westminster; Tinskeep (1908 D897554-9 S Ag Ni 502Na), Citenic (1910 B63279D-E S Ni Po 203Na), Loskene (2110 A263426-F Ni Po 703Na) and Fema (2210 C7638B9-C Ni 312Na).

The patent is currently vacant, the last count having died during the Rebellion.

Lagaar Subsector (Subsector C of Zarushagar): Lagaar was a battleground for the Loyal and Vengeance fleets throughout the early years of the Rebellion. Now, with Dulinor pushed back to spinward, it has gained a reprieve, but Lagaar still faces an uphill battle.

The subsector economy is in tatters, and much of the subsector nobility has fled, disappeared or been killed. Some modicum of order has been restored by Lucan's Governor-General Sharr, but any true effort at rebuilding falls on the shoulders of the remaining nobility. Repeated requests to the emperor have yielded little in the way of new patents being awarded.

Overall, few worlds pay more than lip service to the Iridium Throne. Most systems have a fairly independent outlook, which reflects the general attitude of most of the sector. Ω



Random Nuggets





By James Maliszewski

Adventures stand at the heart of **MegaTraveller**. Given the vast size of the Imperium, though, supplying adventures can prove difficult task for any referee. And the ubiquity and ease of space travel often make it difficult for the referee to "steer" players into areas prepared for adventure scenarios. Add the chaos of the Imperium's sector-spanning Rebellion, and the referee is left with a seemingly insurmountable problem.

One of the best solutions is a collection of random nuggets. These "adventures in the rough" contain enough information to allow the referee to run a satisfying scenario without having to restrict the player characters' freedom of movement. Each nugget is generic enough to occur almost anywhere in the Shattered Imperium. At the same time, the nugget is specific enough to allow for an adventure as full-blown as the referee and players desire. Finally, each nugget contains variations so that any nugget can be used multiple times, enhancing its utility to the referee.

What follows is a collection of random nuggets tailored for the Imperium's ongoing Rebellion No nugget is set in the territory of a specific faction. In this way, the referee can substitute whatever faction is desired given the current circumstances and location of the player characters.

Noble

Required Skills: Computer, Intrusion, Weapons.

Required Equipment: Weapons.

A noble (or, more correctly, a former noble) wants to hire the PCs to help him in his efforts to reinstate himself to his former position of authority. When the Rebellion broke out, he found himself in a difficult position. He wholeheartedly supported his faction's agenda, but he also criticized some of its most egregious excesses in seeking to achieve its goals. A cabal was thus formed against him, and it conspired to have him removed from his position by spreading false rumors and generally impugning his honor. The cabal succeeded, and its leader was then given the noble's patent and placed in his position. The noble wishes to hire the PCs to break into an office belonging to his detractor and steal protected computer information which will clear his good name and help him regain his position.

There are six possible variations of this scenario.

1. All is as stated. The office is minimally guarded, and the information gained by the PCs will clear the noble's name and help reinstate him in his faction's government.

2. All is as stated, but the office is heavily guarded because a spy has informed the detractor that the noble has hired the PCs for this mission. The PCs will meet a great deal of resistance at the office, but, provided they overcome it, the information so gained will clear the noble's name as in 1.

3. All is as stated, but the detractor has set a trap for the PCs. He will allow the PCs to enter the office with minimal resistance and steal the information. Local law enforcement, however, will be tipped off on the break-in and will attempt to arrest the PCs. If they succeed in capturing the PCs, the link to the noble may be discovered, further discrediting him. In addition, the so-called information the PCs steal will be false and, once again, will impugn the name of the noble.

4. The noble is telling the truth, but the detractor's charges against him were legitimate. He wants the PCs to steal the information so he can destroy it and undermine his detractor's case against him.

5. The charges against the noble are legitimate, but the detractor is equally shady in his own dealings. The information gained by the PCs will be used to blackmail his detractor as well as to clear the noble's name. The office will be heavily guarded since the detractor is paranoid about just such a possibility.

6. The noble is a con man engaging in industrial espionage. The supposed information to clear his name is actually protected trade data which the con man will sell to the highest bidder.

Ex-Marine Officer

Required Skills: Starship Skills, Weapons.

Required Equipment: Starship (any type).

The PCs are covertly contacted by an ex-marine officer who is looking for passage off-world. He is willing to pay highly for a means to transport him and five others as quietly as possible.

He is very reluctant to give reasons as to why secrecy is involved. If pressed, he will admit that he and his men are deserters from the armed forces of their faction. They do not agree with its ideology/policies/treatment of soldiers, etc.

He adds that if the player characters perform their jobs quickly and quietly, he may be able to get them equally appealing jobs on their destination world.

There are six possible variations of this scenario.

1. All is as stated. The officer and his men are deserters from factional armed forces who are fed up with the Rebellion and their jobs. He will pay well and will indeed get the PCs another equally lucrative transport job on the next world.

2. The troops are indeed deserters, but they left their unit because they are war criminals guilty of terrible atrocities against civilians. They are paranoid and jumpy, taking even the slightest provocation to start a fight. They will pay, but they will soon ask for their money back, telling some hard luck story. If not reimbursed, they will try to take control of the PCs' starship.

3. The marines are all cyborgs who are fleeing lynch mobs. The world they just left has a distinct anticyborg prejudice, and the soldiers would surely have been killed. The rest of their story is true, as is their desire to help the PCs at the destination world.

4. The troops are cyborg terrorists. They are fleeing this world because they have just failed in an attempt to destroy a local governmental building. Before the local law enforcers arrive, they want to leave the planet. They have no money and will promise to pay on arrival. If they suspect that the PCs do not trust them or are going to turn them in, they will try to seize the PCs' ship.

5. The marines are actually pirates. They are down on their luck and in need of a ship. They have money and will pay the PCs. Once in jump, however, they will attempt to kill the PCs and take control of their ship.

6. The marines are espionage agents for another faction. They fear discovery and wish to leave the world quickly. They will pay and, at the destination, give the PCs an opportunity to do further runs for the espionage agency for their faction (provided that the PCs seem trustworthy).

Scientist

Required Skills: Starship Skills.

Required Equipment: Starship (any type).

The PCs are approached by a scientist who asks if the PCs would transport her and her assistant to the next world. She will pay high passages for her and her assistant, as well as the going rate for one ton of cargo. The scientist expresses that there is some urgency to her request. She says she is going to be behind schedule for a technological conference on the destination world.

Because of the Rebellion, chartered flights are becoming difficult between some worlds, which is why she needs the PCs' help.

There are six possible variations of this scenario.

1. All is as stated. The scientist and her assistant are gong to a technological conference, and their cargo is research equipment.

2. All is as stated, but the scientist's cargo is one ton of loaded weights. Her real cargo is her assistant, an advanced pseudobiological robot.

3. As in 2, but the robot has been stolen from a military lab from her faction. She designed the robot as an explorer and diplomat, but the military planned to use it as an assassin. Rather than allow her creation to be perverted to evil ends, she stole the robot and is planning to escape to another world. The factional military is hunting for her and the stolen robot.

4. As in 2, but the scientist designed the robot to be an assassin. Unfortunately, the factional military planned to use the robot to assassinate military and political enemies, not professional ones as the scientist has planned. She is taking the robot to the technological conference to eliminate her professional rivals, many of who are Imperium-renowned researchers and scientists.

5. The scientist and her assistant are an advance party for a psionics institute. The local faction has begun to crack down on such activities, and the institute has decided to move on to a safer world. The one ton of cargo material contains diagnostic devices and psionics training materials. Local law enforcement is hunting down these two, and transporting psionic devices is a High Justice crime.

6. The scientist and her assistant are members of an anti-Lucan organization known as the Brothers of Varian. The cargo is a very small, elaborate thermonuclear device. They intend to destroy the technological conference and the scientists there. Many of the scientists attending have been known to supply advanced weapons and military devices for Lucan's faction. In addition, such an action would heighten the public's awareness of the Brothers of Varian and its agenda.

Professor

Required Skills: Weapons, Stealth, Intrusion, Recon.

Required Equipment: Weapons, Lockpick equipment.

The PCs are approached by a professor at a local university. He informs them that a number of his colleagues were bold enough to support a student group engaged in protesting the actions of the local faction. These fellow professors felt that by bringing the errors of the faction to light, the faction might be forced the rethink its policies and act in a more appropriate fashion. In return for their bravery, the professor's colleagues, along with the students, were arrested and shipped off to an asylum (although he claims that the place is used to house political prisoners).

The professor would like to hire the PCs to break into the asylum and free his fellow professors and their students before any further injustices can be perpetrated.

There are six possible variations of this scenario.

1. All is as the professor stated. The other professors and the students were arrested and interned on purely political reasons, and are being tortured and cruelly interrogated. Should the PCs free them form the asylum, they will have gained the gratitude of a local resistance movement in addition to any promises of monetary gain.

2. All is as stated, but the PCs will find

the the professors and the students very difficult to locate. This is because they have either already been executed for their "crimes" or they have been shipped off to another locale. The PCs can choose what to do from here.

3. All is as the professor stated, but the students and professors were not arrested merely for protesting. Instead, they were plotting to blow up the local starport as a show of displeasure for the faction. They were arrested and interned because they were viewed as a threat not only to the local faction, but also to the general populace.

4. The professor is lying. He is a member of a terrorist organization which is planning a raid on the faction's internment asylum. He needs the PCs to enter the place first and stir up a commotion looking for the nonexistent students and professors. Once the asylum is sufficiently in an uproar, he and his fellows will raid the place and seek to free as many political prisoners as possible. Whether or not the PCs survive the raid is of no concern to him.

5. The "professor" is actually a member of a local criminal syndicate whose members have been largely caught due to a crackdown on crime by the local faction. He hopes that the PCs will be able to free his fellow crooks and restart operations on this world. He will fairly pay the PCs should they succeed in their mission.

6. As in 5, but the crooks, when freed, will not pay the PCs. They will offer the PCs positions in their criminal syndicate. If the PCs refuse their offer or demand payment, the crooks will try to kill them.

If the player characters accept their offer, the crooks will genuinely accept them as their own.

Pirate

Required Skills: Vacc Suit, Weapons.

Required Equipment: Vacc Suit, Weapons.

A pirate approaches the PCs and asks to hire them as marines for a boarding action. She says that through her underworld sources she has learned that an Imperial Navy ship has been discovered abandoned in the far reaches of the system. The ship holds, she believes, experimental navy equipment and technical information that could be worth megacredits. A factional naval vessel is headed to that locale soon.

She wants the PCs to join her on her ship, and help her find the vessel and steal its valuable cargo before the factional naval vessel arrives.

There are six possible variations of this scenario.

1. The pirate's information is totally incorrect. No ship of any sort will be found. If the pirate and the PCs linger too long searching for the supposed ship, a number of factional patrol cruisers will appear and question their intentions in the system.

2. As in 1, but no patrol cruisers will appear to harass the PCs and the pirate.

3. As in 1, but the patrol cruisers will already be searching that location for pirates and freebooters. They will question the pirate vessel with the intention of boarding it. The pirate is a known and wanted criminal, and mere association with her could end the PCs' careers prematurely.

4. As in 3, but the patrol cruisers immediately open fire on the pirate vessel. Their intention is to capture the pirate, so their shots will be aimed to cripple, not destroy, their target.

5. The naval vessel is indeed located here. However, the factional naval vessels have already reached the spot before the pirate and the PCs get there. The pirate will suggest that they attack the factional vessels. If the pirate and the PCs succeed, the cargo aboard the vessel is worth about MCr5.

6. As in 5, but the factional naval vessels have not yet arrived at that location. If the PCs hurry, they should be able to obtain the experimental equipment and computer files which are worth MCr5 to the right buyer.

News Reporter

Required Skills: Weapons, Vehicle skills, Recon.

Required Equipment: Weapons, Ground Vehicle.

The PCs are approached by a reporter from a local subsectorwide news agency. He is aware that fighting is going on between the two local factions

in a remote area of the world the PCs are on. He would like to get the scoop on other news agencies by being at the battlefront in person so as to get interviews and up-close holopictures.

The reporter wishes to hire the player characters to accompany him to that region of the planet and to guard him against any violence which may come his way as a result of the factional fighting.

There are six possible variations to this scenario.

1. All is as stated. Fighting is going on, but no harm comes the PCs' way. The reporter is able to get his pictures and even a few interviews with little difficulty.

2. All is as stated, but the fighting is very intense. The PCs have to fend off some enemy troops before the reporter can get either holopictures of interviews.

3. All is as stated, but by the time the PCs arrive, the fighting has ended. One side routed the other. The winning side will gladly give interviews and allow pictures. The losing side will mostly have been captured, but the few that are not may attempt commando-style raids while the PCs and reporter are present.

4. All is as stated, but the two sides will not take kindly to the presence of the PCs or the reporter. They will try to capture them at the first available opportunity.

5. The reporter is actually a spy for one of the two fighting factions. He is trying to take reconnaissance pictures so as to help the other side in the battle. If he is discovered, the opposing side will want to execute him and the PCs on charges of espionage.

6. The reporter is really a suicide trooper from one of the two sides. He has been rigged with an explosive device.

He wishes to go behind enemy lines of the opposite faction and then explode the device, killing as many of his enemies as possible, and maybe the PCs as well. Ω

TRAVELLER *News Service*

Kapabu-Sepple Massilia — Date: 306-1122

¶In a predawn raid against Tharaa-bu starport today, forces of Dulinor's Ilelish federation inflicted serious material damage and heavy casualties.

¶Unlike previous deep-penetration strikes against Lucan's Imperium, Dulinor's raiding force on this occasion is said to have consisted exclusively of escorts and support craft (under 1000 tons).

¶While some ground units were landing in support of the assault, unofficial reports suggest that these were forward observer/target designator teams.

¶This hypothesis is supported by the extraordinary first-round accuracy of the orbital bombardment munitions.

¶Official spokespersons for Lucan's Imperium claim that the majority of strikes were purposely targeted on populated areas, but independent observers suggest that most civilian losses were the result of collateral or spill-over damage.

¶Lucan's spokespersons also state that this bloodthirsty massacre offers proof positive that Dulinor has no concern for the safety or welfare of civilians, and that he is unremitting in his efforts to reclaim the Iridium Throne.

¶Several of the independent experts, speaking on the guarantee of absolute anonymity, felt compelled to point out that this attack on Kapabu-Sepple is highly reminiscent of Lucan's strike against Susadi, one of Dulinor's significant holdings in the Gushemege sector.

¶One of these experts went so far as to suggest that this latest attack by Dulinor may simply be a retaliatory strike.

¶Referring to the statements of Confederation Commodore Satina ba-Rek (who commented on Lucan's Susadi strike of 267-1122), this anonymous expert suggested that these assaults may indeed indicate "black days ahead" for various populations and worlds on the periphery of Dulinor's and Lucan's respective centers of power.

¶Drawing comparisons with the hit-and-run tactics that characterized the ruinous yet inconclusive Fourth Frontier War, this senior analyst expressed concern that with conquest now beyond logistical possibility, faction leaders might be resorting to tactics stressing the widespread destruction of enemy resources and transport nexi.

¶"If that is the case," concluded the senior expert, "then we can expect more than a few black days ahead; we can expect a protracted black war."

Sebasta/Solomani Rim — Date: 307-1122

¶Scattered reports of mounting violence—including more than 100 fatalities—have accompanied rumors that the refugees of the Florina Arcology disaster have carried a new, highly infectious strain of hepatitis into their planet's rural communities.

¶The 15 million former inhabitants of the arcology were compelled to leave their massive home when system malfunctions became both severe and effectively irreparable.

¶In the weeks that have followed the 247-1122 evacuation of Florina, forced resettlement of the arcos has overwhelmed the surrounding countryside, throwing the small agricultural and resort communities located there into complete turmoil.

¶With food and water shortages becoming endemic, many of the communities shut their doors against further refugee resettlement, resulting in several armed standoffs with Solomani authorities.

¶An alliance of these defiant communities—known as the Greenie movement—had commenced negotiations with local confederation advisors two weeks ago. Initial reports called the talks "hopeful."

¶However, the sudden outbreak of hepatitis among both rural natives and arco refugees has disrupted the talks, and Greenie hard-liners have reportedly acquired proof that the pathogen was carried to their communities by the arcos.

¶Viral hepatitis was once the most widespread infectious disease on Terra.

¶It is a rarely encountered phenomenon today, having been almost completely eradicated by retroviral therapies during the Second Imperium.

¶Occasionally encountered in outback populations, this new stain of the disease—coded as "hepatitis gamma-three"—is spread by mucosa contact with, or ingestion of, any contaminated object. The crowded, forced communal facilities that now typify those Greenie towns overrun with arco refugees provide an optimum breeding and contagion ground for this pathogen.

Sufren/Diaspora — Date: 322-1122

¶Stemmetal Horizon's local stock shot up an estimated 89 points on the Sufren exchange today after the megacorporation's local executives announced that trials on its new *Roughneck*-class petrochemical harvester had proven to be "highly successful."

¶The concept behind the *Roughneck* class design was to provide prestellar technology worlds with a means of assuring a steady supply of petrochemicals, even if interstellar commerce and dirtside resources proved futile.

¶The *Roughneck* class is a mostly TL6 design with limited TL7 components. Built for rugged use, the VTOL-capable craft is specially designed to insert deep into the atmospheres of large gas giants, where atmospheric processes often combine to produce small amounts (by proportion) of liquid propane and even acetylene.

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placeable—and otherwise unavailable—chemical resource (assuming a suitable large gas giant is located in the system).

¶Advance orders from more than a dozen systems were placed within minutes of Sternmetal's announcement.

Vland/Vland — Date: 329-1122

¶After a legal review by various special committees, the Isgiirdi of the Ziru Sirkaa has formally approved the request of the four Vilani Bureaux to suspend the remittance of dividends on those shares held by the Imperial family.

¶After months of painstaking deliberation on this topic, the Isgiirdi began moving quickly to a consensus when, last week, a jump-5 courier arrived with news of the regency's suspension of confirmation proceedings regarding Lucan's claim to the Iridium Throne.

¶This announcement, made on Anaxias on 259-1122 by IRIS High Regent Garran Tainor-Hughes, formally disallows Lucan the right to claim the throne legitimately until and unless he acquiesces to a public investigation into any allegations of felony which exist against him.

¶In turn, this creates a legal limbo regarding the the title to the Imperial family's considerable shareholding positions in the Vilani megacorporations.

¶Previously, the Isgiirdi had directed the bureaux to continue their dividend payments to Lucan, since he had the right of succession by bloodline, and there had been no formal recognition of any allegations of felonious activities.

¶Now, however, the dividends will be shunted into a fully insured escrow account, its final dispensation of ownership pending upon confirmation of Strephon's successor—whoever that might one day prove to be.

¶The announcement of this decision produced uneven trading on the floor of the Enlugal Commodities Exchange. Although a sharp rise had been anticipated, many expressed concern that this move would have a "chilling effect" on interstellar trade with mercantile partners outside the Ziru Sirkaa.

Agari/Ilelish — Date: 342-1122

¶Adeline Matsumata has turned the bow of her 200-ton free trader *Madame Butterfly* toward the center of the Ilelish Confederation—and has no plans for returning to its rimward periphery. Matsumata is just one of dozens of free merchants who have been leaving this area in recent months.

¶"The only progress I'm making here is that I'm closer to bankruptcy than ever before," Matsumata said in an informal startown bar interview.

¶Like most other traders leaving the area, Matsumata cites frequent trade interdictions due to ongoing Verge Rebellion, which has spilled over into the Ilelish sector.

¶She explained, "One week, a planet is open for trading—with Confederation subsidies, even. Two weeks later, it's under full commercial interdiction. So if you've got a hold full of special cargoes for that world, you're just out of luck; you'll have to go somewhere else and sell at a loss."

¶The revolt's see-saw progress does indeed seem to be the cause of this political (and hence, commercial) turbulence. With worlds changing allegiances as fast as they change governments, mercantile speculation—which depends upon reasonable market predictions—has become practically impossible.

¶Although the intensity of the conflict has steadily diminished since the confederation's unexpected setback at Tiawan/Verge on 198-1122, Dulinor's containment/counterinsurgency tactics have kept the involved regions in a state of unrest and turmoil.

¶Unofficial speculations within the confederation government suggest that Dulinor already considers the rebellious regions to be lost, and is simply attempting to cripple the area with economic sanctions and commerce raiding, as well as ongoing border skirmishes.

Nakindaa/Fornast — Date: 364-1122

¶Riots destroyed the headquarters complex of the Hadaggshi Lanthanun Coil Restraint Works this afternoon when the company's management announced that it had filed for bankruptcy and was suspending operations immediately.

¶Hadaggshi Works, the largest specialty manufacturer of lanthanum coil restraints in known space, cited insufficient sales as the principle factor behind its demise. Hadaggshi Works is predominantly a Vilani-run business.

¶Government analysts suggest that had the company retooled for diversified production late in 1120, it would probably have been able to endure.

¶"Specialty industries just can't survive today, not unless they're right at the heart of the faction's safe area," commented fiscal analyst Haradim Molke. "In order to move the tremendous volume of merchandise that enables specialty producers to survive, you have to have easy, reliable interstellar transportation. That kind of transportation environment died with the Third Imperium."

¶Hadaggshi's plight is only one of hundreds of similar commercial disasters brought on by the increased difficulty and risk of interstellar transportation.

¶Efforts to improve that situation have largely been unsuccessful, even though fleet-level conflict seems to have ended. The vacuum left by the large naval forces of the factions has mostly been filled by corsairs, pirates and privateers. Continued commerce-raiding campaigns by rival factions further erode confidence in the viability of interstellar commerce.

¶Hadaggshi's demise brings unemployment to over 2 million members of Nakindaa's work force. However, unconfirmed reports suggest that three local industries are negotiating to buy Hadaggshi's old industrial process elements for conversion to diversified production tasks. Labor leaders are cautiously optimistic that this may portend new jobs and a shift to a more self-sustaining industrial strategy. Ω

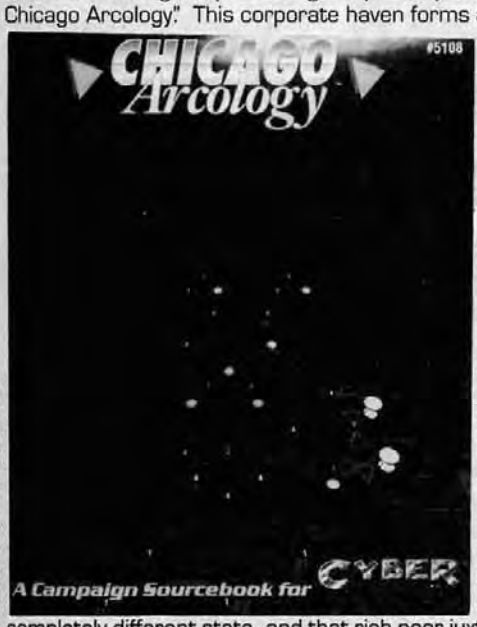
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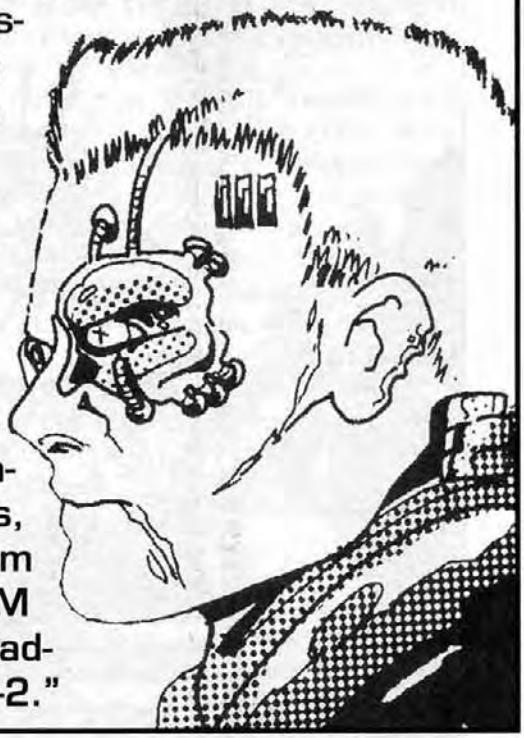
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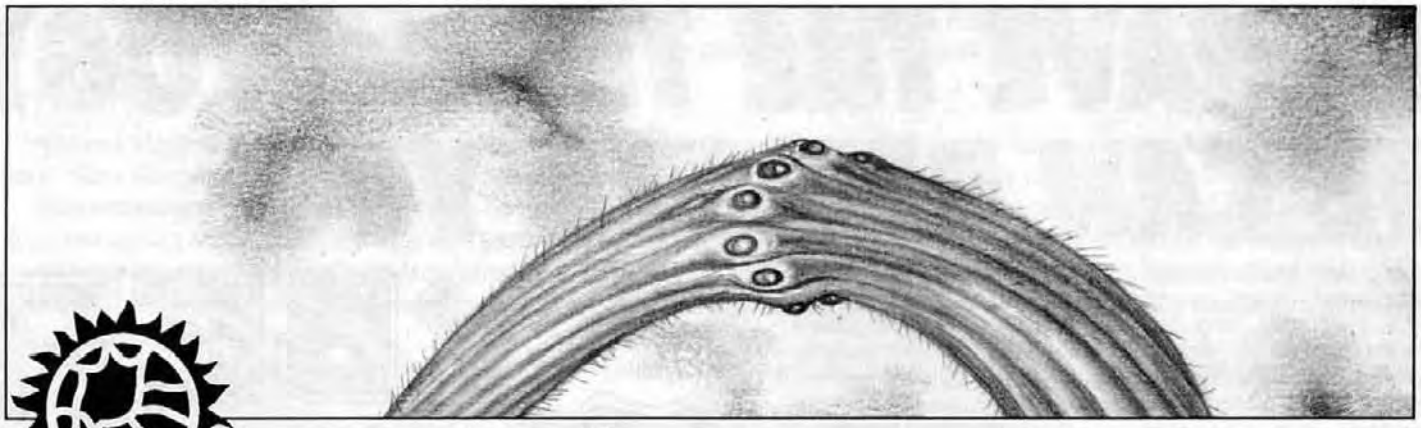


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Contact: Ahetaowa

By Allan Hopkins



The Ahetaowa are a race of animated plants native to hex 2604 of Ealiyasiyw. This is one of the most bizarre races in all of charted space. Although their world is just outside the Hierate, there is regular contact between Aslan and Ahetaowa.

EVOLUTION

Millions of years ago, free swimming and stationary plankton-eating coelenterates developed photosynthetic cells that allowed them to feed on the sun's energy as well as plankton. Stationary coelenterates also gained a foothold on the planet's extensive tidal flats created by the large, close moon. These creatures took their nourishment from sunlight and plankton while submerged. During low tide, they even fed on small animals and insects.

As these coelenterates moved further inland, they developed different methods for retaining moisture. Such adaptations included roots and cuticles covering their soft inner tissues. The plants also developed book lungs to breathe on land, and in areas of poor soil, these terrestrial coelenterates began to feed on small animals. About 2.3 million years ago, the Ahetaowa achieved intelligence by responding to a number of global climatic changes—including predators, fires, earthquakes and other threats.

PHYSIOLOGY

Ahetaowa live to about 300 years of age. An Ahetaowa looks like a cross between a giant sundew and a sea anemone that stands 10 meters tall and weighs 500 kilograms. Ahetaowa usually have a green or bluish green trunk covered with thousands of white cilia The cilia have many functions, including sensing, feeding and reproduction.

Movement: Ahetaowa move with a simple set of muscles which run the length of the trunk and circle its width. The trunk is prehensile; in effect, the plant is one single, large limb. Because movement is thus restricted to the very basic, Ahetaowa cooperate when making or handling items, often working in relays. They also use psionics and robotics to enhance their limited physical abilities.

Senses: Olfactory sensors are located near the bottom of the trunk. Blue-green eyes are arranged in three bands near the bottom, middle and top. The eyes allow the Ahetaowa to see with 360° vision. Resolution is not as good as in a human, but they are able to distinguish red, blue and yellow.

The Ahetaowa hear and communicate in a variety of ways. First, they can communicate with one another through vibrations in their cilia. They are capable of hearing sounds well above and below the range of human hearing. The plants also communicate with their neighbors through harmonics (which sound quite haunting to non-Ahetaowa). They can speak some alien languages and find Trokh fairly easy. Ahetaowa also use telepathy to communicate with those beyond their range of hearing.

Psionics: Nearly all Ahetaowa are psionic. Psionics have provided the Ahetaowa with the means by which they have reached their current level of technology, augmenting their other senses and abilities with their psionic aptitude.

They often prefer to manipulate objects with telekinesis rather than physical contact. They use clairvoyance to sense objects beyond their range of sight and hearing, and use telepathy and empathy to communicate with those beyond their range of hearing (and thus, for example, can use burrowing animals to mine iron ore). And they can also transport themselves or objects by teleporting to other locations, but this happens rarely—teleportation requires the Ahetaowa to uproot, which they are not wont to do without good reason.

Nervous System: Each Ahetaowa has three brains: one in the base of the trunk, one in the middle, and the other on top. The brain at the base is the center of reason; the middle one coordinates the motor functions; and the top one takes information from the sensory organs. The rest of the nervous system consists of a neural net spanning throughout the Ahetaowa's body.

Nutrient System: Just underneath the thin, porous, but very tough cuticle are the Ahetaowas' photosynthetic cells. The sugar produced by these cells is taken by the bloodstream and stored in the roots. This moderate root system also collects and stores moisture from the soil. In addition, the feeding polyps distributed all across the trunk paralyze insects and small animals with nematocysts and ingest them into the central gut.

Respiratory and Circulatory Systems: The Ahetaowa breathe through a set of book lungs near the base of the trunk. Five hearts ringing the gut pump blue copper-based blood throughout the body. This circulation system allows the Ahetaowa to use their stored energy for activity.

Hibernation: As an adaptation to the frequent earthquakes and occasional droughts on their homeworld, the Ahetaowa go into a state of suspended animation when uprooted. The creature simply curls up and the cuticle hardens until conditions again turn more favorable. An Ahetaowa can induce this state of hibernation in itself or another by voluntarily uprooting itself or causing the other to be uprooted.

Reproduction: Ahetaowa are hermaphroditic. The reproductive polyps are yellow buds with a velvety covering which release a sweet smell. The smell attracts small animals that get a meal of nectar while they dislodge sperm cells which they inadvertently carry to other polyps. The fertilized polyp then hardens into a tough rubbery shell enclosing an egg. Eventually, the shell dries and falls to the ground. After a couple of weeks, the nonsentient larva emerges and sprouts its roots.

Care of young is reminiscent of the Hivers. During the first couple of years of life, the nonsentient larva is ignored. When the young Ahetaowa becomes sentient, it is raised by the neighboring adults.

PSYCHOLOGY

The Ahetaowa believe that everything is part of a single entity. For example, they feel that they are an integral part of their world, yet are dependent on it for their very existence. Thus, the Ahetaowa are quite communal and selfless—and will place the needs of the group before the needs of an individual. Even their concept of individualism is sketchy—an individual will refer to itself as *we* rather than as I.

Ahetaowa are fairly conservative due to their basic desire for harmony in all things. They especially value nature and society—often choosing personal names that reflect locations on the planet and nearby natural features.

SOCIETY

Ahetaowa society is egalitarian. They cooperate at every task, and each is obliged to carry its own weight. The plants often share their possessions and assume that any member can have something if it needs it. In fact, Ahetaowa sometimes cause a bit of trouble by "borrowing" artifacts from visiting Aslan—with no harm intended.

Of course, Ahetaowa are quite open. They are completely honest (sometimes to a fault) and are willing to share their thoughts with everyone who will listen. They also generally assume that Aslan they come in contact with are telling the truth—and they are baffled if they find that anyone is lying.

Justice is quite simple and casual among the Ahetaowa. For minor offences, the individual is ostracized and ignored by its neighbors for awhile. For major offences (such as psionic assault on an Ahetaowa), a group of individuals from the local area will judge and psionically probe the accused. For a period of time, the plant is uprooted and transplanted to an isolated location. In some cases, it is simply left in suspended animation on a flat rock.

There are no cities on the surface of the planet Ahetaowa, except the starport run by the Seieakh clan. Most of the Ahetaowa live in the river valleys of their homeworld. They live outdoors: Their only structures are dikes, seawalls, and canals for flood control and irrigation. The Ahetaowa have no concept of privacy or modesty, since they have no need for clothing and shelter.

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HISTORY

Around –30,000, the last ice age ended on the planet Ahetaowa. However, the sea level started to rise. As a result, the Ahetaowa cooperated in making the earliest dikes and irrigation ditches on the continent of Hrekhas.

A worldwide drought in –10,000 caused the deserts to expand. The Ahetaowa created extensive canals to supply badly needed water. This change in climate displaced many Ahetaowa and gave them the drive to move into new areas. There was also some contention over water, which made the normally pacifist Ahetaowa more belligerent.

During this time, Ahetaowa of different valleys fought wars with each other. In making weapons, they discovered metalworking.

Around –5000, the Ahetaowa constructed ships (which carried dirt, water and animals) and started to colonize other areas of the planet. After the initial colonies were established, some Ahetaowa were teleported in suspended animation by their neighbors. The Ahetaowa had fully explored their world by –3000.

Since the Ahetaowa had global communication via telepathy, they were able to establish and maintain a global government, despite their preindustrial technology.

The first industrialization occurred about –2500 as a result of trade between different areas on the planet. However, there wasn't much impact on the environment. Most of the industry was small scale, and factories were open-air assemblies of Ahetaowa cooperating on an assembly line.

Around –100, the Ahetaowa made the first explorations and colonization of the moon A'ahels.

The Seikh clan contacted the Ahetaowa clan in 730. The relations were cordial, and trade developed nicely. The Seikh clan built the starport in 801.

Since their homeworld is a good distance from the Imperium and a few parsecs into the Great Rift, the Ahetaowa have so far been largely unaffected by the Rebellion.

TECHNOLOGY

The Ahetaowa achieved TL12 after a gradual and conservative evolution. Ahetaowa think of technology as art, and most Ahetaowa technology is modeled after patterns seen in plants and animals on their homeworld.

For example, they contour robots or vehicles to match the forms of animals, while cilia-held devices resemble leaves or flowers.

The leading edge of Ahetaowa technology is in computers and robotics, which perform such tasks as exploring and transplanting. An extensive computer net allows Ahetaowa access to information without going anywhere. Ahetaowa also have narrowcast devices (such as maser communicators) that allow them to communicate with those in orbit.

Ahetaowa do have starships and grav vehicles, but this technology is still relatively new. Such craft will often have dirt floors and no compartmentalization. Environmental technology is also relatively new—the Ahetaowa only had the need for it since the first space explorations.

Military technology is virtually nonexistent. The Ahetaowa are pacifists and have no need for weapons. When violence is necessary, they prefer to use psionic assault, telekinesis or pyrotech (see page 101 of the **Players' Manual**). Ω

CHALLENGE Conventions

PANDEMONIUM IX, January 18-19 at the Ryerson Hub Cafeteria, Toronto, Ontario. For more information, write to Pandemonium IX, 17B Wales Ave., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5T 1J2.

EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN '92, February 7-9 at the Student Center of Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. For additional information, send a SASE to the SIU Strategic Games Society, Office of Student Development, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-4425.

WARCON '92, February 7-9 in the Memorial Student Center, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX. For more information, write to MSC Nova, Box J1, College Station, TX 78440-9081.

DUNDRACON XVI, February 14-17 at the San Ramon Marriott, 2600 Bishop Drive, San Ramon, CA 94583. For information, write to DunDraCon, 386 Alcatraz Ave., Oakland, CA 94618.

ORCCON 15, February 14-17 at the Los Angeles Airport Hyatt Hotel. For more information, you can contact Strategicon, PO Box 8399, Long Beach, CA 90808.

TOTAL CONFUSION, February 21-23 at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel, 181 Boston Post Road, Marlborough, MA 01752. For information, write to The Total Confusion Convention, PO Box 1463, Worcester, MA 01607.

JAXCON '92, February 28-March 1 at the Jacksonville International Airport Radisson Inn, Jacksonville, FL. Write to Jaxcon '92, PO Box 4423, Jacksonville, FL 32201.

WORLD HORROR CONVENTION, March 5-8 at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, Nashville, TN. Contact the World Horror Convention 1992, PO Box 22817, Nashville, TN 37202.

NEOVENTION XI, March 27-29 at the Gardner Student Center on the University of Akron campus. Send an SASE to University Gaming Society, Gardner Student Center #6, University of Akron, Akron, OH 44325.

POCON, April 3-5 at the Holiday Inn in Bartonsville, PA. Write to Ed Dowgaillo, PO Box 390, Effort, PA 18330.

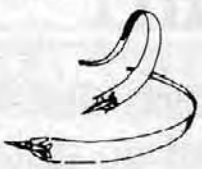
GAMEX '92, May 22-25 at the Los Angeles Airport Hyatt Hotel. Write to Strategicon, PO Box 8399, Long Beach, CA 90808.

GATEWAY 12, September 4-7 at the Los Angeles Airport Hyatt Hotel. For more information, contact Strategicon, PO Box 8399, Long Beach, CA 90808.

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CHALLENGE Briefs

FASA has announced the release of *Frost Death* for *Renegade Legion*. Commonwealth Intelligence has hatched a hare-brained mission: take out a TOG command center on the other side of Caralis. No commander wants to send a good Commonwealth unit to such certain doom, but the Renegade 2567th Provisional Infantry Legion has a few expendable troops.

2300 RESOURCE is the quarterly journal for the **2300 AD** gamer. Write to Resource Publications, PO Box 31146, Santa Barbara, CA 93130.

BLACKSBURG TACTICAL RESEARCH CENTER announces the following new products and supplements: *3G³* (third edition *3G!* rules), *Deathwind* (*Corps* adventure), *Supertanker of Death* (*TimeLords* adventures) and the Finnish language edition of *Macho Women with Guns (Aseistetut Machonaiset)*.

TOR BOOKS, a leading publisher of science fiction and fantasy, has announced its plans to publish a three-book series based on the *Car Wars* game. The first book, already written, is by David Drake, author of *Hammer's Slammers* and other best-selling SF novels. *Car Warriors I: The Square Deal* will be released in early 1992.

AVALON HILL has joined with The Smithsonian Institution in the publication of the American History Series of entry-level boardgames. Games planned include *Battle of the Bulge, D-Day, Midway, Guadalcanal, Mustangs* and *Gettysburg*.

BLOOD & LUST is an adventure collection for *Pendragon* by Chaosium Inc. Each of the five tales guides the player-knights through encounters with dangerous monsters and awesome foes, against skilled knights and enormous castle walls.

THE ARASAKA BRAINWORM is an official *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.* role-playing game adventure by Thomas M. Kane. Write to Atlas Games, PO Box 406, Northfield, MN 55057.

STEVE JACKSON GAMES' new releases include *Magic Items II, Coup, Autoduel Quarterly 9/4* and *GURPS Magic* (reprint).

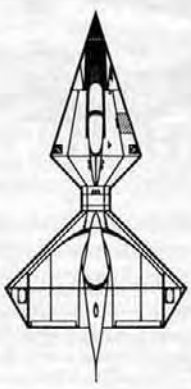
OUTPOST is a futuristic boardgame of industrial competitiveness by TimJim Games. Contact Thomas M. Magee, HGI Marketing Services, (619) 258-9393.

***Challenge** Briefs describes gaming news and releases from a variety of publishers. Announcements should be sent in at least four months before a product is released, if possible. Write to **Challenge** Briefs, Managing Editor, PO Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61702-1646 USA.*

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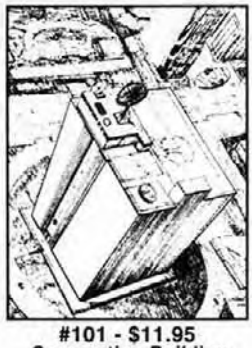


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Gnawlings

By Charles E. Gannon

A hacker PC comes across a strange message late one February night, while hopping from one datanet to the other, searching for interesting goings-on. The hacker had just wormed inside the FedNet for a quick look-see when he stumbled across this transmission.

...now warrants a Stage III alert, due to evolution of pattern. All 17 missing persons were solitary out-of-towners. All had been staying in MetroCenter on business. Rate of disappearances is 0.89 per night (17 disappearances over the course of 19 days). Assuming that all these disappearances have a similar cause, this indicates a *daily* phenomenon. On no single day has more than one individual been reported as missing. The two nights on which no report was received may indicate either:

1. A disappearance did not take place, perhaps because of circumstances preventing such an occurrence. Or:

2. Any individuals disappearing on these nights have no associates to report them as missing.

Formally requesting immediate dispatch of limited special team to this station to facilitate formal investigation.

My best to all at the Shop.

Code 98-234-01B. Wild Weasel, Station Operative, New Orleans Metroplex.

Awaiting your response.

After a short wait, the PC is rewarded by a reply from the other end of the data pipeline:

"Counter Code: 23-356-BB5. Octagon, Jr. Operations Coordinator, Langley HQ.

>Accessing...

>Reciprocal transmission approved...

Negative your request for limited special team, Wild Weasel. Operational assets overtaxed. Your observations and report duly noted and taken under advisement. Continue with primary mission. Disappearances are deemed secondary priority and will be investigated as resources permit.

Octagon

This adventure is set in New Orleans, and can be used as a complement to other **Dark Conspiracy** adventures there or as a stand-alone piece. If the characters have already had some run-ins with the Dark Ones in the Big Easy, this can be a reprise of their earlier visit. If they haven't been to New Orleans before, referees can use this adventure to lure them into this favorite Dark Minion haven.

If mere big-heartedness is not enough to get the PCs to head to the Big Easy, then any number of additional incentives are possible. Perhaps a regular contact puts the group in touch with distraught parents offering a reward for information concerning the fate of their daughter, Joanna Danske, who has been missing for 12 days

Or maybe an employment broker who works by modem offers the group a job to investigate the disappearances. The MetroCops of the Big Easy are excluding the Louisiana State Police from the investigation. As a result, the LSP is willing to hire some independent help to look into the matter and report their findings confidentially to State Police Chief Tremaine in Baton Rouge.

WELCOME TO N'AWLINS, LOOZ-YANA

The Greater Depression caused a tremendous influx of rural persons into New Orleans, desperately seeking jobs. Thus, although outsiders are still not welcome, the primary point of prejudice is based on an individual's economic wherewithal, not geographic origins.

The affluent MetroCenter of the city includes the French Quarter, Garden District and surrounding areas. The French Quarter has been restored to its antebellum glory (although Bourbon Street has retained a small measure of its seedy, decadent charm). Reproduction Packards vie with horse-drawn carriages and Mazda Firefly ragtops for dominance of the cobblestone streets. On Bourbon Street, bodystockings compete with bodices and bustles in the ongoing contest to make the most anachronistic fashion statement.

Beyond the affluent MetroCenter regions and the Mike-town districts that surround them, the poverty of the inhabitants becomes increasingly abject. However, February is Mardi Gras season, so visitors will find themselves in the midst of a jarring mix of riotous festivity and impoverished desperation. Emotions are changeable among all but the upper classes, and a local's celebratory attitude can change into homicidal frenzy as a result of even the slightest (or imagined) provocation.

Locals (who refer to their state as Loozyana and their city as N'awlins) are accustomed to out-of-towners and are ever-mindful that their economy still depends largely upon the steady influx of cargo from the outside world. Also, Mardi Gras is the United States' biggest, longest, wildest, open party—held along the hopelessly crowded length of Bourbon Street—and it is still well-attended by the corporate elite who can afford the airfare and accommodations.

Cross-country travel is risky at best for those heading to New Orleans since the city is bracketed by Out-Law areas and Demongrounds. River travel down the Mississippi is an option (albeit a time consuming one). New Orleans is still a major seaport, and both airports are still operating (although the Lakefront Airport now primarily serves as a vertiport for helicopter and VTOLs).

The PCs will be able to find affordable housing in Mike-Town, just outside the megacorporate Dreamland that dominates the MetroCenter.

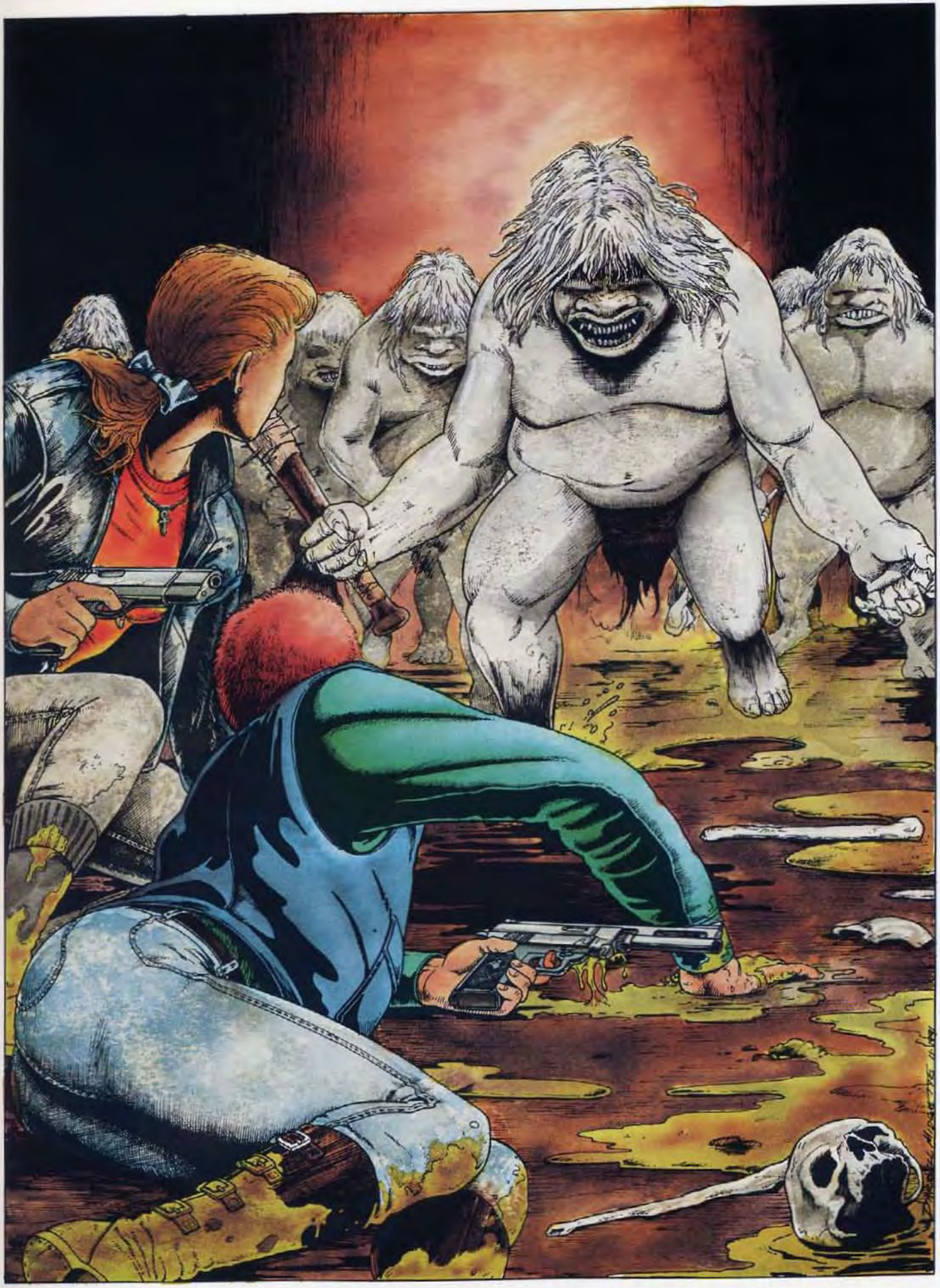
PUBLIC SOURCES

Although the characters may want to explore a number of sources when it comes to beginning their investigation, the following are the most likely (and ultimately, the most productive).

Scan the Local Newsfaxes from the Past Month: This task will take one person a single day (and larger numbers of researchers proportionately shorter amounts of time). There will be nothing much to learn here, besides the fact that the local police are *quite* sure that there are 17 missing persons unaccounted for over the past 19 days. However, they don't seem to be will-

For more adventure in New Orleans...

Referees may wish to use this adventure in conjunction with the recently released **New Orleans** adventure module. The background information included in that book (detailing the size and population of the New Orleans metroplex, as well as travel and weather details) can greatly aid the referee in setting the scene for "Gnawlings," whether "Gnawlings" is used as a sequel or a prequel to the action in the **New Orleans** module, or as a separate, red herring plot line.



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ing to say very much about it, nor are they willing to disclose any of the names of the missing persons.

All public statements have been issued by the Vieux Carre (French Quarter) Metropolitan/Corporate Joint Force Precinct. Since these statements are coming from a specific precinct (rather than Metro HQ), the police must have reason to suspect that the disappearances (or whatever is causing them) is situated in the French Quarter.

Talk to Police: The Joint Task Force is a hodgepodge of corporate security forces and metro police—and neither side seems too happy about this forced fusion of law enforcement agencies.

As a result, the cops—whether municipal or private—have a sour and decidedly unfriendly attitude. If the PCs try to get information about the disappearances, they will be told in direct—and tactless—terms to mind their own business. On a particularly bad interpersonal reaction roll, the desk officer might decide to dedicate a couple of his less conscientious (and meaty) patrolmen to making some trouble for the PCs. This could involve anything as obvious as a little breaking-and-entering at the PCs' place back in Mike Town, to a little roughing-up when the bulls are off-duty.

If the PCs are particularly polite and affable, they will only be growled at a bit—and will receive the distinct impression that the entire disappearance problem is being backburnered and treated as a minor disturbance. Use of Human Empathy, or an extraordinary success with an Interrogation or Psychology task roll, will leave the PCs with the impression that the municipal cops aren't happy about the low priority this case has been given and that this is the doing of the megacorporate brass.

The bottom line is that the police will not surrender any information. They will be particularly careful not to reveal the names of the missing persons, nor the places where they had been staying, the specific reasons they were in New Orleans, or any other pertinent details.

However, judging from their reaction, it is clear that the police *do* have all this information available to them.

If the player characters are very persistent, and very affable, one detective (originally from Duluth) lets it slip that he found the last victim's wallet and credit cards in a dumpster at the corner of Bourbon Street and Orleans Avenue. He considers this the most interesting clue yet: Obviously, if the missing persons have been abducted, the perpetrators are not motivated by financial gain. There have been no ransom demands at all, and now there's evidence that the perpetrators (if there *are* any perpetrators) don't even bother to use a perfectly good card for credit fraud.

Data Break-in on the Police Department Files: A break in will not be an easy task, requiring many hours of patiently weaving through a daunting set of codeword checkpoints and counter-intrusion defensive programs. The player characters will find the task easier if they attempt it during the day, when the computer system is cluttered with other users and memory-intensive activities: With serving time slowed down, a hacker has more response time to contemplate and defeat the defenses he encounters. Also, a clever hacker may be able to get piggybacked into the system by disguising his intrusion within a legitimate, active data interface, such as a fax line, modem hookup or car-to-base shortwave data nets.

Once in, the PCs will find it relatively easy to access the complete file on the case of the 17 missing persons. Most surprising is the *lack* of material and the fact that there is currently no detective assigned to the case. The police are keeping records but are not acting on them. Attached electronic memos talk about the questionable authenticity and unconfirmable nature of the missing person reports. The megacorporate security view seems to be that until someone shows up dead, this case is likely to be a wild goose chase in pursuit of people who may have simply decided to skip town. Memos by the MetroCop chief suggest that he doesn't agree with this line of reasoning but that he's compelled to admit that the precinct's law enforcement assets are already spread critically thin.

The 17 missing persons are from diverse cities and backgrounds. In fact, the only linking factors seems to be that they were all staying in upper-class neighborhoods of MetroCenter (known as Dreamland), they were all out-of-towners, and they were all travelling alone. The police file includes their home addresses, next of kin, known activities just before they disappeared, stated reason for being in New Orleans, etc.

News Media Contacts in the City: If any of the PCs are connected with the media or can put on a convincing (and documented) act that they are "vacationing reporters," the PCs will find some of the local newspeople helpful.

In general, members of the local media are more than a little displeased with the police, having gotten nothing but "no comment" and "we're looking into it" statements. They do know the names of nine of the missing persons, however, since the family/friends of these individuals called the news agencies when they learned that the police weren't being particularly aggressive about the investigation.

The newspeople also know where the missing individuals were staying, the kinds of business they were in, etc. According to

DARK CONSPIRACY

those who called in, none of the nine missing persons were at all likely to simply disappear on an adventurous (or harebrained) lark. Each of the individuals was a clear-headed, capable businessperson who had travelled to New Orleans on important, career-related matters.

CONFIDENTIAL SOURCES

After pursuing the above sources of information, the PCs should have at least a partial (and possibly, a complete) list of the missing persons. However, the easily available information on these persons does not produce any clear leads. In any crime (which this *looks* like, but that hasn't been proven yet), there is usually some noteworthy aspect or variable shared by victims, some commonality in either time, place, association, etc. So far, none is obvious.

Of course, the player characters have only accessed the *public* information on these individuals. A number of confidential sources of information exist on all individuals: tax returns, medical records, credit card activity, bank statements, communication activity, etc.

Accessing these confidential data sources requires success at difficult (and highly illegal) tasks. Referees who want to add a little extra action to the adventure are encouraged to make the *key* data source (communication activity) inaccessible by computer hacking. Instead, the records are not online, but are either stored in a communication-isolated computer (not connected to any phone lines) or as hard copy only (in a file cabinet, vault, etc.).

In this event, the player characters will have to conduct a break-in to get the necessary records. This break-in should involve an actual (or narrowly avoided potential) run-in with security forces. Adjust numbers, armament and skills according to those in the player character party, bearing in mind that night watchmen are rarely up to commando standards. (Experienced, handguns, Initiative 3 is about the best they're likely to encounter).

Communication Activity: The best (and most conclusively revealing) source of confidential data is the missing individual's communications activity while in New Orleans.

The hard way of getting that data is by breaking into the telecommunications company that handles New Orleans phones (and vidtext, etc.).

The *much* easier way is to hack into the databases of the respective hotels at which the individuals stayed and call up their communications charges (which list phone numbers dialed, etc.). These communications records show a wide variety of activity, but there is one common factor: On the night of their disappearance, 12 of the individuals called the same phone number. It is usually the last—or next to last—number that they called. If the player characters decide to call that number (a public phone might be a wise precaution), they will find it answered by a cheery voice that announces, "Ole N'awlins Cookery. How can I help you?" If they decide to try to track the number electronically (requiring an easier hacking job into the telecommunications company's database), they will discover the same information (but spend several hours and risk detection by the company's defensive anti-intrusion programs).

A third way PCs could get this information is to (somehow) access transaction data on the credit cards owned by the missing persons. About 50% of them indicate that the card holder purchased a meal at the Ole N'awlins Cookery the evening they disappeared.

Note: If the PCs only have the limited list of missing persons from the local media, they will discover that six of the individuals' communications records indicate the Cookery's phone number, and five show credit card purchases at the same establishment.

PASS ME THAT GUMBO

The Ole N'Awlins Cookery is located on Orleans Street, just off Bourbon—not far from where the police detective said he found the last missing individual's wallet. The cookery is a modest, homey place with a plain electric sign and a long reputation for good food. A little research will indicate that it came under new ownership just over a year ago after its previous owner died of a heart attack.

The cookery is famed for its local cuisine, including gumbo, cajun dishes of all types, Creole, and alligator sausage. Out back—nestled in between the old brick buildings—is an open-air courtyard where cressets hold live torches and giant fern fronds emerge from the shadows like dim green claws. The player characters can observe the cookery from a nearby watching post or actually eat there in order to get a closer look. Either way, they will notice nothing very unusual.

The owner—Roland Clersault—is a friendly fellow with a big belly and a bigger Cajun accent. Out in the courtyard, a small, heavy man—almost a dwarf—plays the banjo, murmuring melodies of how much he loves Nawlins. Judging from his dark glasses and groping uncertainty when reaching for his tall-necked beer, it would seem that he is blind.

The PCs may be misled by a few suspicious-looking types at corner table, apparently closing some shady deal, etc. But nothing of any real importance will happen until closing time, if the PCs hang around that long. The owner (who has long since asked the characters to address him as "Rollie") will seem to have struck up quite a lively conversation with a fellow who came in alone toward the end of the evening. As closing time approaches, Rollie will also try to get the PCs to pay up and say goodnight—even as he's buying the other fellow a round on the house. If the PCs are unwilling to depart—or if they insinuate themselves into Rollie's conversation with the lone fellow at the bar—the evening will end on a pleasant, affable note, with Rollie ushering them all out after about half an hour. However, any individual who's looking for it (or who succeeds at a Average Interrogation or Psychology task roll) will sense that Rollie's congeniality became more superficial after the player characters failed to leave when first given their bill.

If the PCs *do* leave shortly after Rollie presents the bill, they will be in for a shock when they get the late update edition of the next day's newsfax: The lone fellow's picture is on the front page. It seems that he is now the 18th missing person. Surprise, surprise.

NOW WHAT?

The player characters should have enough information to be fairly sure that Roland Clersault is involved in the disappearances and that any abductions probably take place in or near the Ole N'awlins Cookery. What they decide to do about it is another matter:

Attack: Not too bright an idea. The cookery is right in the middle of megacorporate Dreamland—local security is pervasive and no-nonsense. If the PCs start a firefight, it is very unlikely that they will live to finish it. Also, upon returning to the cookery (assuming they want to get inside first) they'll find that Rollie is somewhere "in the back"—not an easy target this time.

Catch Rollie In the Act: This won't work either—everything seems to be in order. No matter how long the PCs watch and wait, it's just the "same old same old" at the Old N'awlins Cookery.

Confront Rollie With the Truth: This will certainly get a big laugh out of Rollie—who will only believe the PCs to be serious after they repeatedly insist that he's a kidnapper. Once he believes them to be serious, he will ask them—quietly, politely, but firmly—to leave. Or he'll call the cops.

If the PCs are frustrated, that's fine—they ought to be. They can't see it just yet, but any of these tactics are sure to bear fruit—very soon now.

CAN'T YOU SMELL THAT SMELL?

The PCs are correct—Rollie is involved in the disappearances. Since he enjoys a skill level of 8 in Human Empathy, he has no problem discerning that the characters are now suspicious of him and mean to end his activities. Of course, if they attack or confront him directly, he won't need his empathic powers to know what's going on. In the event that the group runs a stake-out on the cookery, he will wait three days. After that time, he must act, for he needs to resume his abduction of unsuspecting people in order to satisfy the appetites of his primary clientele.

Immediately after attacking or confronting Rollie, or after another day of staking out the cookery, the PCs will return to their lodgings. It is after midnight, and they are tired. One or more should still be awake—awake enough to have a chance to detect the approach of some most unwelcome visitors.

If the PCs are in a large, commercial building, the first warning of the visitors' approach will be sound—they'll come in through the large ventilator shafts. If the lodging is in a smaller building (such as a five-story apartment building or converted private home), the first warning will be smell—they'll come in through the sewer connection.

Either way, any character who is awake may attempt to detect the visitors *before* they arrive on the scene (the task is Average if sound is the first warning, Difficult if it is smell).

Either way, the player characters will find themselves confronted by four morlocks (they will enter via in-room ventilation ducts if in a large building or crash down the door in a smaller one). The air will be pervaded by a pungent stench as the squat, broad-limbed creatures shamble forward, slavering and muttering: "Gnawlings! Fresh gnawlings!" They attack with a gustatory smacking of lips.

Two of the morlocks are armed with .357 Magnums, the other two with hatchets. If the PCs were not surprised, it shouldn't be a long fight. However, just as the combat is resolving (the morlocks apparently *had* been counting on surprise), the characters will note a fifth morlock hanging back throughout the fight. On a Average Observation roll, any character may recognize this individual as the blind, banjo-playing dwarf from the cookery. He will toss a curse at the player characters—"Damn gnawlings!"—and scuttle away.

The PCs can try to hit him with gunfire (or whatever), but the little fellow gets away. If the PCs don't run after him in hot pursuit, you can always urge them on with the sound of approaching sirens: All that gunfire was sure to awaken *somebody.* Anything the PCs leave in the room will be confiscated by the police—who will be waiting to ask them some very pointed questions, when and if they return to their lodgings. If the PCs have been foolish enough to leave behind any records of their research into the disappearances—particularly any that indicates their flagrant violations of confidentiality statutes—the police will put out an all-points bulletin on the group.

Though hot on the heels of the banjo-playing morlock, the player characters can't quite get to him before he darts into the crowd that jams the length of Bourbon Street. Loud music, drunken laughter and gaudily costumed celebrants are all part of the Mardi Gras revels. The morlock—still looking like a dwarf in sunglasses—capers into the midst of the crowd, attracting attention with his antics. If the player characters try to do anything to him at this point, the crowd would overwhelm them (and likely tear them apart).

Eventually, the little monster works his way to the center of the street, and during a brief moment when there is a break in the crowd, he heaves up one of the manhole covers and drops down into the sewer.

A taunting laugh echos up after him, obviously meant for the PCs' ears: "Stupid gnawlings!"

INTO THE UNDERWORLD

A cluster of concerned revelers is pointing out the PCs (and their slightly visible weapons) to some of the local police—hard-eyed security cops who heft their M16A2s and start coming forward. The PCs will have to jump in after the morlock or give up the chase.

If they enter the sewers, the PCs will note the same thick, powerful stench that presaged the attack of the morlocks—only much stronger down here. The sewers are very primitive, with a great deal of quasisolid matter underfoot that makes running and breathing equally difficult. However, this revolting ooze also reveals the path of the morlock, whose splay-footed tracks are quite evident.

As the PCs are following the tracks through a number of twists and turns, for a distance of about half a dozen city blocks, the referee might decide that this is a great time to spring a random encounter on the group. Perhaps an alligator, or an insectoid ET out on a completely unconnected errand.

The PCs will eventually emerge into an open area (roughly 20 meters by 20 meters), lit dimly by a shaft of light from overhead. Judging from the clutter of equipment, crude sleeping pallets and extraordinary stench, this would seem to be a warren of morlocks. Gear for as many as 20 or 25 is strewn about. But at the present, only 11 are visible. And they seem to be listening to someone shouting at them from the top of the shaft of light.

If the PCs enter immediately, they will enjoy a round of surprise. If not, one of the morlocks will thrust his flat nose higher into the air and roar accusingly in the direction of the group. Unless the PCs want to retrace their steps through the sewers (and possibly straight into the arms of the local security forces) the group is going to have to fight this one out.

The 11 morlocks (the banjo player is not among them) are Experienced NPCs with Initiative 4 for purposes of combat. They are armed as follows: Two have clubs; three have hatchets; three have some kind of average-small handgun (.38 Special, .22 High-Standard automatic, etc.); two have more lethal handguns (.357 Magnum revolver and 19mm HP-35); and one has a 9mm Uzi submachinegun.

This should be a short, sharp firefight at murderously close range. The morlocks are not expecting the PCs so soon, and so will not have any ambush prepared. Although the player characters may take some hits, the fight should be pretty one-sided in favor of the humans.

In the last few moments of the battle, the PCs will hear a dull clank overhead. At the same time, the light from above will go out. But there are innumerable small fires burning down in this subterranean chamber—enough to dimly illuminate the walls. Scribbled on the side of the wall in bold block letters, old graffiti probably left by a long-dead sewer worker—ironically proclaims, "Welcome to N'awlins!" Alongside the legend, a stick figure is seen waving. (So this is why the morlocks call the humans "gnawlings.") The basic artwork has apparently been changed recently—by barbarous hands not accustomed to human lettering. Written in dried blood, the words have been amended to read: "You're Welcome to the GNawlings!" Predictably, a shorter, stocky stick figure has been added to the simple picture, apparently "gnawing" on the human's leg.

As the group reads this perverse graffiti, there is a moment of collective silence—enough to allow them all to hear a faint hissing overhead. And maybe, just maybe, detect the smell of gas.

LIKE ANY GOOD SHOW, IT ENDS WITH A BANG

A quick examination allows the PCs to determine that the hissing is coming from the same place the light had come from earlier; at the top of a narrow (and now dark) overhead shaft—probably a way back to the surface.

It's only a few meters to the top of the shaft, which is sealed with a smallish manhole cover. Just below the surface level, the player characters will discover two gas mains—severed and leaking at a disconcerting rate. A reasonable guess would be that the group has about two minutes before the gas achieves sufficient density in the lower chamber to be ignited by the small fires. It is doubtful if the group could put out all the little fires in time or remain conscious that long—people with Constitutions of 3 or less will already be feeling light-headed and a bit disoriented.

But getting out won't be too pleasant either. Overturning the small iron shaft cover requires a Difficult test of Strength. Once this is accomplished, the PCs will discover that they are in the middle of the ferns at the rear of the cookery's interior courtyard. As soon as the first individual is halfway out of the shaft, the banjo-playing morlock and his loyal lackey Rollie will open up with a warm welcome from their respective weapons—a pistol-gripped Mossberg 500 shotgun and an old M3A1 greasegun. Rollie is an Experienced NPC with an Initiative of 3. The morlock is a Veteran NPC with an Initiative of 5 (he was the overall leader of this little den of murderers).

At first, this may seem like a turkey shoot—with the player characters on the receiving end. But once the PCs manage to get even *one* individual out who is also able to fire, their superior skills should begin to change the tide of battle. Eventually, the player characters should defeat Rollie and the banjo-playing morlock—with just enough time to start dragging any wounded group members away from the cookery as fast as panic-driven legs allow. The player characters will be halfway to Bourbon street when a blast bounces them off the pavement, shattering windows and overturning parked cars. A quick glance to the rear shows that the the cookery itself is an inferno, and from behind it, a great gout of flame rises up into the sky.

Somewhere out on Bourbon street, hushed silence gives way to a growing cacophony of deafening cheers and celebratory hoots. After all, it's only right to show proper appreciation for such a splendid Mardi Gras fireworks display. Ω

Valley of the Hunters

By James L. Cambias

The noted Venus explorer Sir George Provis has contacted the PCs on a matter of some urgency. A year ago, he purchased the rights to an unexplored tract in the mountains east of Mount Maxwell on Venus, intending to develop the region for mining and trade with the natives.

Unfortunately, he has recently contracted Venusian Swamp Rot, a fatal disease that has incapacitated him and will almost certainly kill him in a matter of months.

Therein lies the problem. His purchase of the rights to the region on Venus was a lifetime interest. If no "substantive efforts" at development have been made before his death, his claim will lapse.

But if the area can be mapped, mineral samples gathered and friendly contact established with the natives, then Provis can pass his claim to the region on to his young daughter, Daphne.

What Provis needs is simple: The PCs must go to Venus and map out the area before Sir George dies. He does not have very much money—having spent most of his personal fortune buying his claim—but he can offer the PCs half of the profits from the region, in perpetuity. Naturally, this agreement will only stand if the mapping is accomplished before Sir George dies.

Sir George can provide the PCs with a copy of the rough map of the valley made by the Germans during their aerial survey of the region a few years ago. Otherwise, nothing is known about the area. The German map is a contour map of the region east of Mount Maxwell, with a contour interval of 500 feet.

PLANNING THE EXPEDITION

Provis can provide some monetary backing, but the would-be explorers may wish to seek out other sources of funds. The newspapers will be only mildly interested, contributing £100 at most. If any of the explorers has accumulated Renown in exploration, the Royal Geographic Society may also offer a few hundred pounds.

Water on Venus is freely available. Supplies are more expensive if bought on Venus (allow a 25% markup for everything except pacyosaurs and Lizard-men). Supplies purchased on Earth must be transported by ether-flyer at a cost of £10 per ton. Humans, as well as Lizard-men, require four pounds of food per day.

Travel will be on foot: All airships in the British enclave on Venus are government property and are used for official business only. Lizard-men porters and foragers can be hired for £1 per week; Lizard-men guards cost £2 per week. These workers can be paid in barter goods only (knives, steel axes, rubberized cloth, etc.). The usual arrangement is to leave the payment with their tribal chief, who frequently charges a commission of 5-10%.

Lizard-men porters can carry 40 pounds of food and supplies. Porters cannot forage for food, but a party could bring extra Lizard-men as foragers. A forager can find enough food for himself with an Easy skill roll and can feed one other person for each additional level of difficulty. Foragers cannot carry anything.

Pacyosaurs, like humans on foot, can make about 10 miles per day on Venus. Pacyosaurs can carry immense loads but cannot travel through mountains. Each pacyosaurus requires at least one person with Riding skill to control it.

There are two ways to reach the Kukrokra Valley from Fort Collingswood. The easiest route, in terms of travel, is to skirt the mountains, entering the valley from the north. But this way is the longest in miles and would take many weeks. A more direct route is to head eastward from Alberta, cutting through the mountains. This path is shorter, but pacyosaurs cannot pass through the mountains, making porters necessary.

GATHERING INFORMATION

British Rumors: If the PCs ask around Fort Collingswood for information about the Kukrokra Valley, they will hear several rumors about the region. For each person spoken with, roll 1D6.

Rumors

Roll	*Result*
1	"The natives won't go near the place—taboo. It's supposed to be sacred. They claim the gods will curse anyone entering."
2	"I've got a friend up at Venusstadt who says the Germans sent a party to explore the valley; they came back saying it was worthless. That's why the Germans haven't claimed it."
3	"I once traded a Bowie knife to one of the natives for a ruby the size of an egg; he said it came from there. The place is a treasure-house waiting to be opened. By the way, can you lend me a fiver until Tuesday?"
4	"I heard the Germans sent a party of 50 men into the Kukrokra valley, and not one of them came out alive."
5	"I understand the natives regard the valley as sacred, and each year they take valuable treasures—gold, jewels, tools, whatever—and leave them in the valley."
6	"I wouldn't go there if I were you—that whole region's prone to earthquakes."

Lizard-Men Rumors: The explorers may also want to ask some of the local natives if they know anything about the valley. Most of the tribesmen around Fort Collingswood will know nothing of interest. However, natives from the eastern part of the British colony, around Alberta or the Mount Maxwell region, can provide some information. "It is a place accursed by the great spirits. They have placed guardians in it to slay all who enter. None who have gone into the place of death have returned."

Official Report: The British magistrate in Fort Collingswood can provide little information. The Kukrokra Valley is a mountainous tract east of Mount Maxwell, in the southern part of the Kaiser Wilhelm Mountains. Some aerial mapping was done by the German zeppelin *L-57* a few years ago, but this only established the general features.

The area is not currently administered by any colonial power, though both Britain and Germany have claimed the region. In such cases, a region generally goes to whichever power occupies and develops the area first.

The government agreed to sell Sir George his monopoly on development of the region because it was hoped that such a noted explorer would encourage rapid colonization of the territory and thereby secure British control.

SETTING OUT

Travel from Fort Collingswood to the Kukrokra Valley should be subject to the usual perils of life on Venus. In addition to the normal random encounters, the referee may wish to roll daily on the following table.



Continued on page 42.

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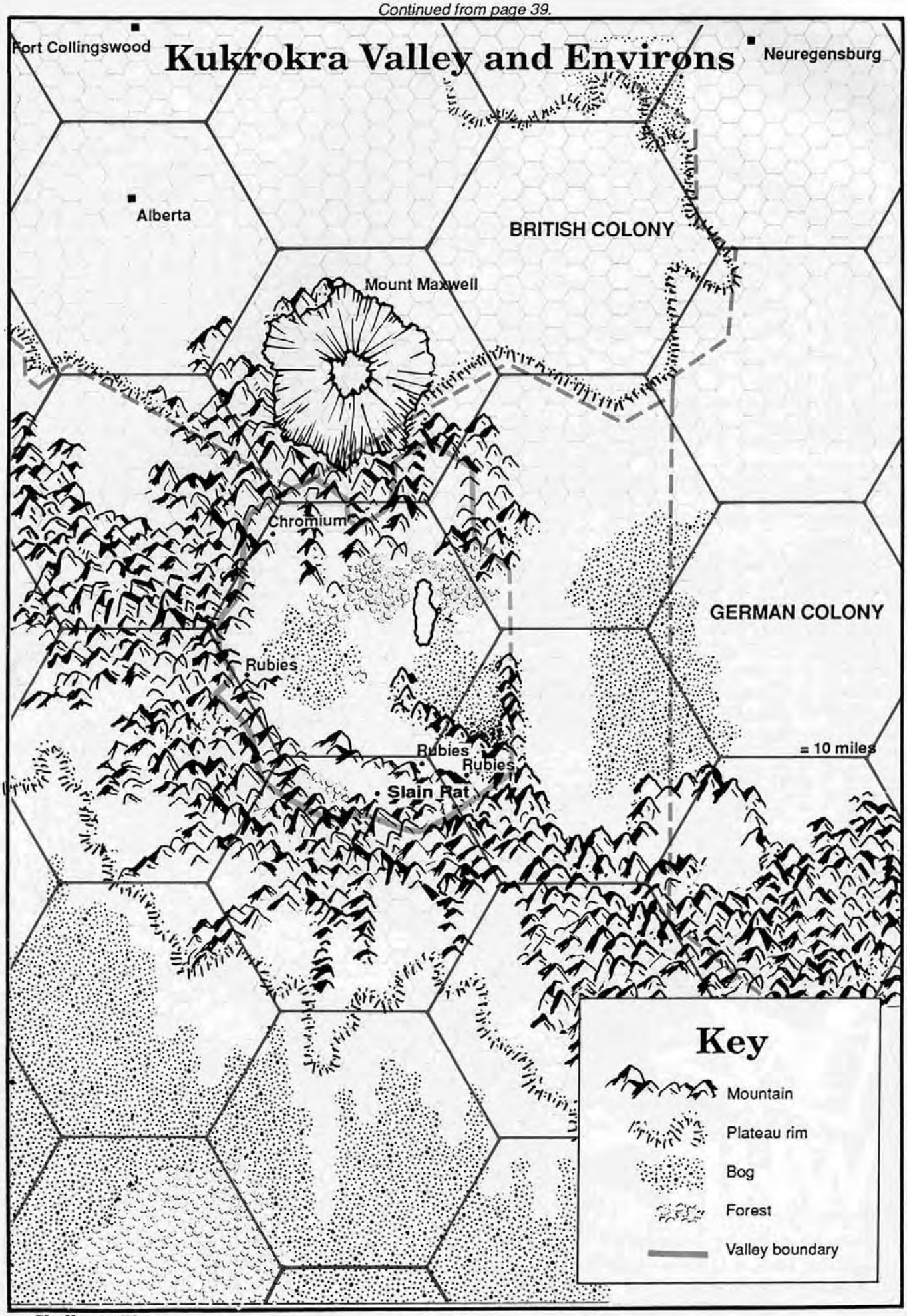
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Continued from page 39.



Incidents

Roll	Result
1	**Grumbling Among the Porters:** The player characters notice that the hired Lizard-men are becoming unenthusiastic about the prospect of entering the "accursed" Kukrokra Valley. If nothing is done to stem this, a full-scale mutiny may result.
2	**Theft:** A Lizard-man in the party has been stealing items from the PCs. These will be minor at first—knives and trade goods, but if it is allowed to continue, the thefts may escalate.
3	**Fight:** Two or more of the hired Lizard-men get into a fight. They will continue to insult each other for the rest of the trip, and one may try to kill the other.
4	**Animal Disease:** A pacyosaurus gets sick. If the party spends a day without travelling, the beast will recover; otherwise, there is a 1 in 6 chance per day of it dying.
5	**Bad Supplies:** Some of the supplies have spoiled—2D6 pounds of food will be unusable and must be abandoned.
6	**Insects:** The expedition runs into a cloud of vicious biting insects. No progress is made this day, and all humans must immediately check for fever.

KUKROKRA VALLEY

The Kukrokra Valley is a beautiful region, surrounded by high peaks, with the titanic cone of Mount Maxwell looming up to the west. Forests and bogs cover much of the valley floor, but there are substantial areas of clear terrain, particularly in the side-valleys.

Lake Constance: This lake (Constanz-See on the German map), 30 miles long by 10 miles wide, is one of the few open bodies of water in the Venusian highlands. No dinosaurs live in the lake, but it is home to crocodiles. The lake is volcanic in origin, and so is extremely deep—so deep that it cannot be measured without special equipment. The water is warm, and has a slight metallic taste, but is drinkable without purification.

Eastern Side-Valleys: The eastern mountains are older and more eroded. Consequently, the eastern valleys are smooth grasslands, good for farming. The eastern mountains have some deposits of rubies. The southernmost side-valley is home to Ensign Douglas (see Survivor, below).

Western Side-Valleys: These valleys are more rugged than the eastern ones. The soil is thinner, and there are occasional landslides during heavy rains. The southernmost valley holds a seam of chromium ore.

FLORA AND FAUNA

The valley is home to several unique and previously undiscovered plants and animals. Some are valuable; some are interesting; and some are very, very dangerous. See the Flora and Fauna Table in the sidebar below.

Giant Worm: Similar to a common earthworm in appearance, but vastly larger, these scavengers wriggle through the bogs of Venus ingesting organic matter. They are shy and unaggressive, but are sufficiently stupid to blunder into travellers and attempt to ingest them.

Number Appearing: 1 *Size:* 1×8 *Move:* L5 *Wounds:* 30 *Save:*— *Weight:* 15 tons *Weapons:* Tail (1,1,3,2), Crush (1,1,1,3).

Gluevine: This dangerous plant has extremely tough vines and grows in dense thickets. The vines are coated with a very strong adhesive that bonds instantly to anything touching the vine. Getting free requires a Difficult Strength roll, plus a Difficult Agility roll to avoid getting stuck to another vine. Being pulled free of a vine may cause a wound (roll 1D6–3 to determine damage). The vines often have the bones of small dinosaurs scattered around them.

Deinonychus: An incredibly fierce small carnosaur, this fast creature attacks with the single large claw on its feet, springing from a place of concealment and chasing down prey. It is a sprinter rather than an endurance runner, but seems to kill even when it is not hungry. Deinonychuses hunt in packs and are dangerously cunning. It is because of these ferocious beasts that Lizard-men avoid the valley.

Number Appearing: 2-12 *Size:* 1×2 *Move:* L40 (for 1 turn, after which it drops to L30) *Wounds:* 6 *Save:* 1 *Weight:* 200 pounds *Weapons:* Claws (4,3,1,4), Teeth (2, 2, 0, 2).

Venusian Rat: The valley is home to the only known species of mammal on Venus, a small, furry, warm-blooded creature that lays eggs and nurses its young. The creature scavenges and feeds on insects. Its fur is oily and water-resistant. Discovery of the Venusian rat has a great deal of scientific value.

Number Appearing: 2-12 *Size:* 1×1 *Move:* 110 *Wounds:* 1 *Save:* 1 *Weight:* 10 pounds *Weapons:* Teeth (1,2,0,1).



DISCOVERIES

Because the expedition is scientific in nature, the PCs will have the opportunity to make several discoveries in the valley. Some are potentially valuable commercially, while others are of purely scientific interest.

Wine Fruit: In the forests, the PCs may notice a large red-and-blue-striped fruit growing on vines twined about the larger trees. If the PCs taste the fruit, they will discover that the liquid inside is fermented, creating a mild alcohol and a delicious flavor. Because of the alcohol, insects and many types of rot do not attack the fruits. The fruits will almost certainly have some commercial value.

Oil: The bog at the southern end of the valley is the site of a petroleum deposit. Natural gas bubbles up through the bog and a film of crude oil lies on the surface. Lighting a fire or firing guns in the bog has a chance of igniting the petroleum, creating an inferno (a 1 in 6 chance per shot fired or per turn that a fire is burning). To recognize the oil field requires an Easy Geology or Chemistry skill roll (no roll is needed if the PCs ignite a fire).

Jewels: The mountains on the eastern side of the valley have several small deposits of rubies. Each deposit holds about £500 worth of readily accessible rubies. To recognize the possibility of jewel deposits requires a Difficult Geology skill roll. Finding a deposit is a Formidable Geology task. There is generally only one deposit per hex, and hunting for jewels takes an entire day.

If the PCs wish to remain at a deposit and dig for rubies, they can uncover £100x(1D6–2) worth per day. If two days go by with no jewels found, then the deposit is played out and will yield no more rubies without special equipment.

Chromium: In the western mountains is a valuable seam of chromium, useful in making stainless steel. Discovery of the lode requires a

Flora and Fauna

Terrain	Jungle	Valley Floor	Bog
Encounter #	**2**	**2**	**3**
Die Roll		*Encounter Type*	
1	Pacyosaurus†	Pacyosaurus†	Giant Worm
2	Tree-Crusher*	Tree-Crusher*	Gluevine
3	Deinonychus	Deinonychus	Brontosaurus†
4	Gluevine	Steller's Dragon*	Steller's Dragon*
5	Hadrosaurus†	Pterodactyl†	Pterodactyl†
6	Venusian Rat	Hadrosaurus†	Hadrosaurus†

*Species described in **Conklin's Atlas of the Worlds**.
†Species described in the basic rules.



Formidable Geology or Chemistry roll. It will be necessary to bring back ore samples to interest anyone in mining the chromium.

Life Forms: The gluevine may have some commercial value in addition to is scientific worth. The deinonychus will attract attention as a new and dangerous dinosaur. The Venusian rat will be worth a great deal of scientific prestige for the discoverer, as the first known mammal-like creature on Venus, but its commercial worth is doubtful.

SURVIVOR

While the party is exploring the side-valley on the southeast side of the Kukrokra Valley, one of the PCs will make an interesting discovery—a Venusian rat, slain by an arrow. What makes the find especially fascinating is that the arrow's tip is made from a shard of diamond! While the diamond chunk is flawed and would be worth only £100 at most, the discovery implies the existence of more diamonds—and of someone living in the valley.

A Difficult Tracking task roll will lead the party from the dead animal to Ensign Douglas' cave. Douglas, a lone survivor of the Armstrong expedition of 1873, is living in a cave in the mountains just east where the PCs discovered the slain rat.

Douglas is a gaunt, filthy, ragged figure, barely recognizable as human. He is nervous, twitching constantly, and will initially be terrified of the PCs. Food is the one thing that will entice him—he has been living on raw flesh and insects for 16 years.

If Douglas is treated well, he will gradually calm down and tell the PCs that the 1873 expedition landed near the mountain, then split up in four groups, three in the conveyors and one aboard the ether flyer. Captain Armstrong was on the flyer. Douglas' group went east for a day, then something went wrong with the conveyor, and the craft crashed. The survivors fled through the bogs, pursued by Lizard-men, then into the highlands and through the mountains, trying to get back to the big mountain.

At this point, his narration halts. If pressed, he will reluctantly continue. "Then the fast runners came and killed Jordan. They tore him open right in front of me. I tried to stop them—I emptied my revolver—but he was dead, and they ate him.

"I couldn't go on alone—not with those things waiting out there for me. Captain Armstrong never came looking for me. Nobody ever came."

Once he has adjusted to their presence, Douglas will eagerly accompany the party back to civilization. He will not be much use on the expedition, spending all his time huddled near the campfire, eating sweets. If the party encounters dinosaurs, he will flee to the safety of the nearest tree.

GERMAN EXPEDITION

The PCs are not the only ones currently exploring the Kukrokra Valley. Two German officers, Fritz Pfaufurt and Gerhart Mauser, are surveying the region for the Imperial German North Venus Trading Company, accompanied by four Lizard-man troopers. The troopers are Trained NPCs, with Marksmanship 3, Physically oriented, armed with a knife and a rifle. Pfaufurt and Mauser both have heavy double rifles, as well as Mauser bolt-action guns. They also have the usual camping equipment and surveying gear, plus four pacyosaurs and enough food to remain in the valley for two weeks without needing to hunt.

After the PCs have been exploring the valley for an appropriate time, they will encounter the Germans: The referee may either check each hex the PCs enter to see if they encounter the rival expedition or may introduce them at a dramatically appropriate moment. If the PCs are hard-pressed by fierce dinosaurs, the sound of gunfire may bring the Germans to the scene just in time to save the PCs from a grisly death. Alternatively, the Germans may shadow the PCs' party, remaining out of sight but keeping a close watch on the characters.

If the PCs have a large and formidable-looking group, the Germans will be friendly, hoping to get as much information from the PCs as possible, then will dash off to establish their own claim before the PCs can. They may engage in sabotage to slow down the PC characters, or one of the Germans may remain behind to harass the party with surprise attacks.

If the PCs' group is small, then the Germans will try to bully the PCs, ordering them to leave "German territory" and threatening to use force. If there is a confrontation, the two Germans may decide to eliminate the PCs and blame their deaths on the fierce Deinonychus.

OUTCOMES

If the PCs complete a thorough survey of the valley and prevent Pfaufurt and Mauser from making their claim first, then Sir George's rights to the region will be secured and development can begin.

If the Germans succeed in getting back to civilization and registering their own claim, then the PCs and Sir George have lost. The valley will become German territory. However, the PCs have a "trump card" if they think of it: Ensign Douglas has been living in

the valley for 16 years. Clearly the region should be British, as an Englishman was the first settler!

If they succeed, the PCs either keep their interest in the valley—it will still be some time before any large-scale development can begin—or they can sell their shares for immediate cash. The price should be determined by the referee and by how well the PCs bargain with prospective buyers.

Any proceeds from the sale of rubies, diamonds or specimens brought back from the valley must be shared with Sir George and Daphne, and possibly Douglas.

LIEUTENANT FRITZ PFAUFURT

Lieutenant Pfaufurt is a good-natured young man who loves the danger and excitement of exploration. He is a firm believer in the superiority of the Nordic races and tends to treat everyone else—from Frenchmen to Lizard-men—as inferiors. Pfaufurt is devoted to Mauser and would be shocked to learn that the feeling is not reciprocated.

Attribute		*Skill*
Str:	6	Fisticuffs 5, Throwing 3, Close Combat 3 (edged weapon)
End:	5	Wilderness Travel 6 (mapping), Fieldcraft 1, Swimming 1
Agl:	2	Stealth 1, Marksmanship 2 (rifle)
Int:	1	Observation 1
Chr:	4	Eloquence 3, Linguistic 3 (Lizard-man, English, Russian)
Soc:	3	Riding 3 (horse), Leadership 3, Medicine 1

Motives: Arrogant, Adventuresome.

Appearance: Pfaufurt is a huge, ramrod-straight young officer, the archetype of the blond, blue-eyed, Nordic "superman." He is, however, slightly dim and a little clumsy. Somehow he is able to keep his uniform spotless and pressed, even in the Venusian wilderness.

CAPTAIN GERHART MAUSER

Mauser is chiefly interested in making enough money to retire to a life of ease as a country gentleman in Germany.

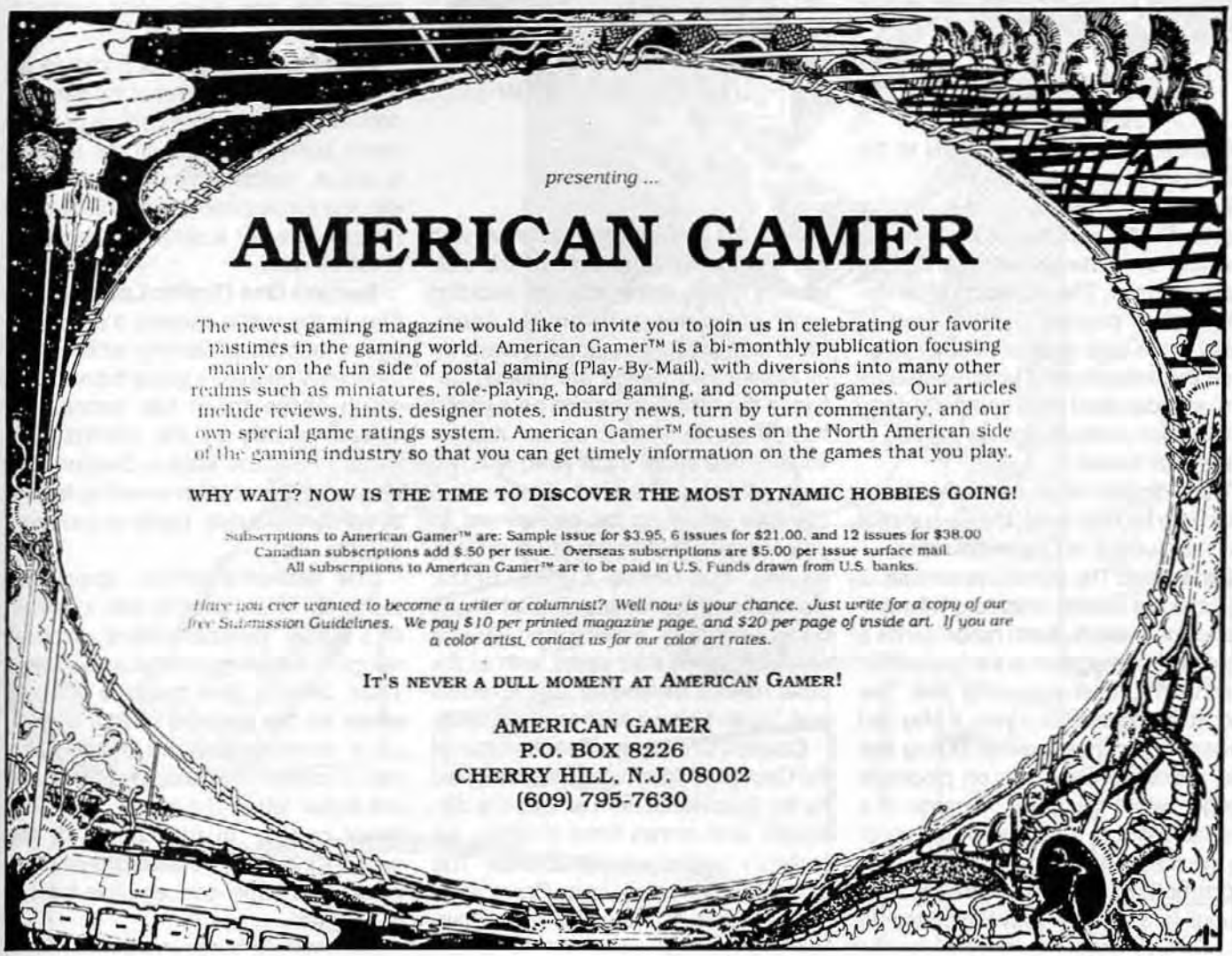
If he discovers that the valley can make him rich, then nothing—not even Pfaufurt—will stand in the way. Mauser will not be hindered by trivial concerns of honor or propriety.



Attribute		*Skill*
Str:	2	Fisticuffs 1, Throwing 1, Close Combat 2 (edged weapon)
End:	5	Wilderness Travel 5 (mapping), Marksmanship 3 (rifle), Fieldcraft 2, Tracking 2
Agl:	6	Stealth 5
Int:	4	Observation 4, Science 1 (biology)
Chr:	1	Linguistics 2 (Lizard-man, English)
Soc:	3	Riding 2 (pacyosaurus), Leadership 1

Motives: Greedy, Ruthless.

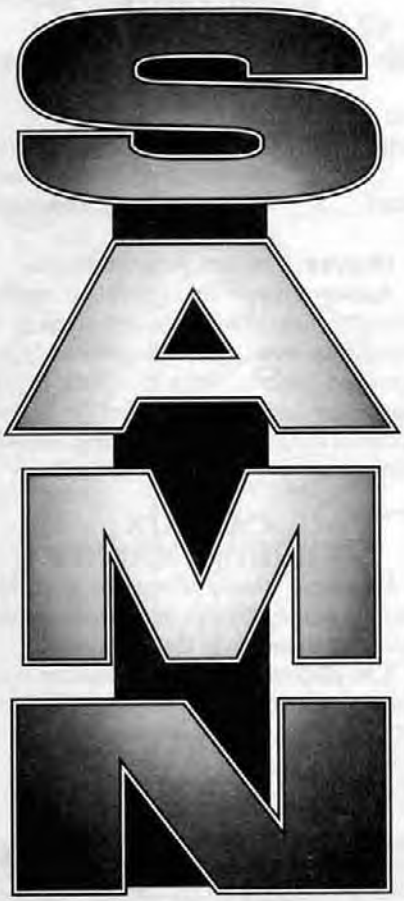
Appearance: Mauser is a small, lithe man, whose eyes constantly dart about, alert for possible dangers or rewards. His hair and eyes are dark, and he prefers to wear civilian clothes in the field, rather than his army uniform. He is never without several concealed knives on his person. Ω



It has been said, with a certain measure of idealism, that justice is blind. More accurately, it is technology, more than justice, that is without sight. For not only will technology allow mankind to reap new benefits in terms of knowledge and opportunity, it will also grant man the ability to prey upon his fellows, and then to escape capture.

So it has been with the technology of spaceflight. Just as the nations of Earth have spread themselves among the stars, planting their colonies on strange and distant worlds, criminals have used the powers of spaceflight to take them light-years beyond the scene of their crimes and to perpetrate new crimes as they prey upon unsuspecting merchants, jeopardizing the life blood of colonization efforts, for their own personal gain.

To fight this new form of criminal, one that uses the spacelanes in which to hide, a new crime-fighting organization has been created by Earth's spacefaring nations: the Spacelanes Activity Monitoring Network, or SAMN, known less formally as Sammy-N.



By Erick Melton

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSEMBLY

Situated at the top of SAMN is the Administrative Assembly (AA).

Function: Created by the original charter, the AA's function is to define the direction the network takes and what means it uses. The Administrative Assembly has created Section Four to assist in the fight against piracy, developed the Independent Monitoring System, and identified environmental damage to alien ecosystems as "crimes of interstellar transit."

The Administrative Assembly is divided into two sections, the Secretariat and the Council of Commissioners.

Secretariat: The Secretariat consists of the individual nations which are full members of the network. Each nation sends a two-member delegation to the Secretariat, in addition to their supporting staff. The Secretariat meets twice a year, in May and November, for three weeks. During that time, it debates and votes on proposals brought before the group. Passage of a proposal requires a two-thirds majority of the member nations.

Council of Commissioners: The council is a smaller body which meets year round and is more concerned with the day-to-day operation of the network. It is also responsible for deciding which proposals go before the Secretariat for a vote. The council is made up of eight seats, which are rotated between the member nations on a yearly basis—the two most senior nations vacate their seats each year, and two new nations are added. The nations currently sitting on the council are, in order of seniority, France, Mexico, UAR, Azania, the United States, Brazil, Canada and Manchuria. Based on the current rotation, France and Mexico will next vacate their seats, with all the other nations moving up, and Australia and Japan being added to the council.

Council Chairman: The chairman of the Council of Commissioners is elected by the Secretariat from among the delegates and comes from a nation not currently seated on the council. The current chairman is Vilman Gross, from the Republic of Germany. The chairman sees to it that the normal rules of order are maintained and directs the debate before the council. In the event of a tie, it is up to the chairman to cast the deciding vote. Additionally, based on legal findings brought forth by the Section One legal department, the chairman may block a proposal from being discussed by the council, and hence by the Secretariat as well. This is used when a proposal is considered to be too political in nature and best left up to international diplomacy. Also, in the absence of a clear majority, the chairman may decide to "pass" a proposal for the Secretariat's consideration.

CENTRAL BUREAU

The Central Bureau was stationed in Melbourne until 2247, when it was moved to Provence Nouveau on the planet Tirane. This move made the network the first and only international organization with its headquarters off of the planet Earth. (The Orbital Quarantine Command at Gateway became the second such body, although SAMN remains the only extra-Solar organization.)

Function: The Central Bureau is the functional headquarters of the network, coordinating the maintenance of monitoring buoys, activities of the national bureaus, special agents and advisors, etc. It is divided into four sections, each responsible for a different aspect of SAMN's work.

Section One (Traffic/Law): Section One is the traffic section. It's work focuses on criminal activity which is not inherently related to space travel, but in which space travel has become involved, usually by the criminal's attempt to escape justice. Section One also is responsible for covering reports of safety violations, rights of passage, and the like.

The network's charter specifically prevents it from dealing with incidents of a purely "political" nature, such as refugees escaping political persecution. Thus, Section One has also come to serve as the network's legal department, deciding what are legitimate areas of concern for the network and what are better left to the realm of international politics. In the course of the network's history, Section One has displayed a sharply conservative bent in this regard.


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Due to work in recent years by organizations such as the North American Research League, Section One has taken on the job of covering incidents of criminal behavior in regard to environmental damage of alien ecosystems.

Section Two (Smuggling): Section Two is the section responsible for smuggling operations, particularly in the area of illegal drugs, bio-mods and cyberwear. The department maintains a list of dangerous substances, organisms and devices, which it distributes to all national bureaus.

Section Two works closely with Earth's Orbital Quarantine Command and Tirane's Quarantine Interdiction System. Illegal cartels often develop new and more dangerous products off planet, then try to sneak the formulas or plans back to Earth and Tirane for synthesis and sale. Occasionally such groups even attempt to smuggle the actual material to the Core worlds.

Section Three (Special Files): Section Three is the special files section. This is literally the heart of the work that SAMN does in the fight against interstellar criminals. Centered around one of the most advanced computer systems in existence, Section Three is responsible for the continuous filing, referencing and cross-checking of data from the thousands of reports sent in to the Central Bureau everyday. Every aspect of a crime—its location, type, people involved, mode of operation, etc.—is broken down and entered into the system, where hundreds of checks and simulations are run.

From the data correlated by Section Three, other sections develop criminal activity reports—called "rainbow reports" because they are color-coded by degree of urgency. Coding includes white (known facts of a recent incident), yellow (partial list of one or two known characteristics of a suspect and/or vessel), green (possible identification of suspect or vessel and/or mode of operation), red (best subject for recent incident), blue (strong suspect and/or known criminal background), and black (known criminal wanted for arrest). These reports form the single greatest service SAMN provides to its member nations.

Section Four (Piracy): Section Four is the first new section established since the founding of SAMN. Originally a department of Section One, Section Four deals specifically with piracy and related activities. Due to the growing incidents of space hijacking and the entrenchment of family-style pirate syndicates, the Secretariat voted in 2297 to form a separate section to deal with the problem. Section Four is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of SAMN's independent sensor system, scheduled to become fully operational by 2305.

Special Personnel and Resources: Each section also has a special personnel and resources department. This represents a pool of internationally recognized experts in specific areas of study.

Section Two, for example, has on its list the names of experts in the area of substance abuse, cyberpsychosis and the means smugglers use to sneak illegal goods through space. Section Four lists individuals knowledgeable on the activities of specific pirate networks or the means used to evade detection by piracy-suppression patrols (such as drive smearing or dock-rocks).

The individuals on these lists have agreed to make themselves available, whenever possible, to assist the various national bureaus when their particular expertise is needed. It is up to the national bureau in question to decide what degree of power the special operative will have.

NATIONAL BUREAUS

National bureaus provide the front-line units of SAMN's work. Each is an independent body, considered to be the property of the nation which funds and staffs it. There is no set number of national bureaus, as this will change with the number of nations participating in SAMN's charter and the number of branch offices set according to each nation's need.

Each nation is responsible for the cost of maintaining its national bureau and the attendant branch offices. This is usually accomplished by attaching the bureau to the department or office most closely associated with the work being done. The United States, for example, has its national bureau in Washington, DC, staffed by members of the treasury department. In addition, the US maintains branch offices in Hope (the capital of the Hermes Colony on Mu Herculis), in Liberty (the capital of

Ellis), and on the orbital transfer station servicing the King colony. The Republic of Texas also uses members of its treasury department, augmented by agents from the Texas Rangers.

STATUS

Up until now, SAMN has had to rely on information submitted by the member nations from a wide variety of sources, including navigational buoys, sensor readings from commercial and space guard vessels, and criminal investigation reports. But SAMN recently passed a proposal to establish an independent monitoring system, a network of passive sensor buoys to be seeded in various systems to record data for pick up by the local national bureau. The IMS information will then be sent directly to the Central Bureau for processing. Special attention is to be given to systems which lie off the main travel routes and are suspected of harboring syndicate dock-rocks. The IMS proposal passed by the barest of margins, with strong vocal condemnations from Mexico, Argentina and the Inca Republic. In light of American support for the proposal, they felt it was another example of "Yankee" intervention into their affairs.

One of the more controversial actions being proposed before the council is the formation of an international piracy suppression force. This action has caused sharp division among the network's members, and some outside observers fear it could end up dividing the network. Strongly in favor are the United States and Australia, with their history of antipiratical fervor, and Manchuria, reeling under the recent upsurge of activity in its arm of space. Mexico, Argentina and the Inca Republic have all threatened to leave the network if the proposal passes, and France fears a bleeding off of fighting units from the Kafer conflict. Ω

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*For more information on piracy in **2300 AD**, refer to "Piracy: The Sweet Trade in Space" (**Challenge 41**) and "Catch & Carry Team" (**Challenge 45**), both by Erick Melton.*


LAWRENSTEIN



You're trying to buy a black market item from a sharp-eyed contact—maybe your armorer or technician. You hand him the cash, and watch as he first glances it, then looks again, his eyes widening in surprise. Then his brow furrows with rage, and his face turns red and blotchy. He's obviously pretty irked by what he sees as an attempt to dupe him with counterfeit cash. Only perseverance and some extra real nuyen will calm him down.

You've apparently been given some funny money—over 10,000 nuyen, in fact. You know exactly where it came from—it's the entire cash payment for the last job! From the trusted (until now) Mr. Johnson you just did business with.

Assuming you don't geek him out of hand, Mr. J will flip when confronted. Checking his remaining financial reserves, he'll discover a substantial portion to be fake. He's been burned too, and he thinks he knows who did it. In a routine sale of hot decks to an entrepreneur by the name of Crazy Vic, he seems to have come into possession of about 100,000 nuyen in counterfeit. This might also explain why Crazy Vic hasn't been answering his phone lately.

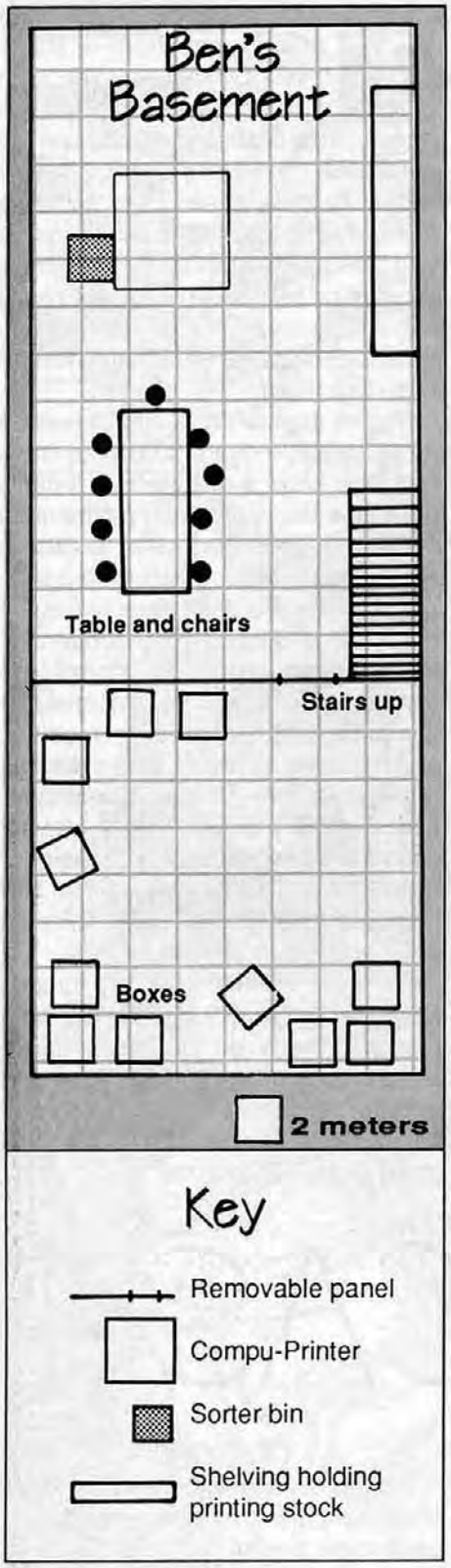
Oh well. Vic has certainly jumped town, but it's the only lead the you have (assuming you want your money back). Mr. Johnson also wants his back and will offer 20% of the funds recovered as a finders fee. Sounds like Crazy Vic is going to pay for this one.

FAST CASH

CRAZY VIC

Word is out on the streets that a load of trash paper has hit town. Everybody's being extra careful, and the PCs would have a hard time passing off any of their bad bread.

Crazy Vic resides in a low-security complex in Spring Lake, Renton. Normally, Vic's personal security measures for his mid-sized apartment are pretty tight, but, alas, the outside lock appears already bypassed. Crazy Vic is inside, quite dead of a resourceful variety of wounds to various parts of his body.



The apartment has been professionally ransacked, and nothing of real value or information is to be found.

The only real clue for the PCs to find here is the Orc in riding leathers who comes in the back way calling out Vic's name. Said Orc will break and run as soon as he sees the PCs. He will do his best to get to his bike (a Harley Scorpion with two forward-facing Ingram Valiants and one rearward-facing grenade launcher), possibly treating the PCs to a high-speed chase through the streets of Renton.

This Orc is, surprise, surprise, wired for a rig. If captured, this Orc is fairly easy to interrogate. He will say his name is Racer 0 (pronounced "oh") and that he was only dropping in on his old buddy, Vic, to see about some business. He's really sorry Vic is geeked (if he saw the body or is told), but that's the way things go in this business if you step on the wrong toes.

On a successful Interrogation roll, Racer 0 will reveal his exact business with Vic—running contraband into the Sioux Nation via the Cascade Orcs. Most recently, he's been moving money. On a second successful Interrogation roll, he will admit that he also knows where it's being printed (Vic let the info slip one night). On a third successful Interrogation roll, Racer 0 will reveal who's running this business: the Mafia. Oh boy.

It appears that Crazy Vic finally lived up to his name. Used as a minor gopher for a counterfeiting ring, he was given a bad run (an electronic glitch caused a flaw in an entire batch of bills) to dispose of—meaning to destroy, not pass. But Vic's greed got the better of him, and he figured he could loose the flash and be out of town before his bosses knew any better. He was apparently mistaken.

The PCs can make their interrogation of Racer 0 a bit easier by offering a bribe. Every 100 nuyen offered is a +1 modifier to the interrogation. Also, if he's reasonably well treated and fears for his own life, Rider may throw in with the PCs.

NATIVE AMERICAN NATIONS

Agents of Native American Nations have been keeping Vic's place under surveillance and will track the characters when they leave. On a successful Perception roll, the PCs may notice their tail. If confronted, the agents will explain their interest and offer to hire the PCs to hit the printing hideout and either destroy or recover the paper and ink stocks (stolen from the Sioux Nation last month). The agents would prefer that the materials be recovered and brought to them for destruction—just to be sure.

The Compu-Printer, a computerized printing press, does not "print" per se, but actually draws each bill to an exacting degree. Thus, with gook programming and the proper stocks, one machine can duplicate any bill. Indeed, the real difficulty in counterfeiting is acquiring the right stocks, the specially coded and constructed paper and inks that make the money unique. These are the real target of the run. Destroy the stocks and the ring is shut down.

The NAN has a vested interest in breaking this counterfeit ring. The money is being distributed into the Sioux Nation, not Seattle. Thus, the NAN agents are trying to track down the culprits, But they don't want to touch off an international incident and would be more than happy to hire a team of investigators to do the dirty work.

They will offer 20,000 nuyen apiece for the job, 40,000 if the PCs bring up that it's a bit dangerous to be hitting the Mafia. The NAN can supply the time and place where the printer should be programming the press for the next shipment.

The exact composition of the NAN team has been left vague, as the PCs should not get into a firefight with them. However, if needed, use a mix of Former Tribal Warriors (*Sprawl*), Tribesmen (*Shadowrun*) and Shamen (*Shadowrun*). Toughen them up a bit, as these guys should have a little edge over the PC team.

CYCLE SHOP

The hideout is hidden under Ben's Cycle Shop, Redmond (use the small store from *Sprawl*; remove the rear shelves and add garage doors to the back). Ben's is in a standard security rating "C" neighborhood, surrounded on three sides by alleys.

Present are Ben, two mechanics and two customers getting their trendy scooters fixed. Downstairs, things are a whole lot tougher:

The stairs down lead into a square room crammed with spare motorcycle parts, tools and supplies. A loud, mechanical hum (the printer) is coming from one wall. Close examination of the wall will reveal a removable panel through which the PCs can enter the room. If the crew upstairs was taken care of quietly, the bad guys within will be taken by surprise. Soldiers will be

sitting around the table, Jerry Gest and Tony will be over by the printer, and Blazer (always the nervous one) will be leaning between the stairwell and the shelves.

If the battle upstairs made a lot of commotion, the press will be shut down, and the Mafia muscle will have taken best available cover, weapons ready.

WRAPPING IT UP

If the PCs leave any clues to their identity, they will have earned a powerful enemy—the Mafia, waiting for the right time to strike.

There is no way to recover Mr. J's real money. But there is about 200,000 good quality counterfeit already run off. Conceivably, it could be fenced as per the normal fencing rules, or the PCs might chance spending it. It's left to the referee to determine just how much trouble they get into.

And let's not forget Karma: This run is pretty basic, worth about three team points. Add Individual Karma awards as appropriate.

NPCs

Racer O: Use Corp Rigger from *Sprawl*; change Corp Etiquette to Drive Bike, and add/subtract relevant Orc racial modifications.

Ben and the Mechanics: Use the Gang Leader archetype for the store owner (Ben), and give him real leather and a T-250 shotgun. The two mechanics on duty are wearing synth-leather and are carrying roomsweepers. Ben and the mechanics will not hesitate to use the customers present for cover or hostages.

Jerry Gest, Mafia Lieutenant: This operation is Jerry's brainstorm. His first mistake was believing that this project is secure from local and NAN detection. His second was in trusting Crazy Vic as his intermediary with Racer O. Jerry won't attempt to flee no matter how bad things are going.

Use Mafia Soldier from *Sprawl*. Add +1 to Firearms, Intelligence, Willpower and Charisma, +3 to Leadership. He is also Boosted 1, with smartgun link, and wears an armored jacket (tailored). He carries an Ares Predator II smartgun with a reactive trigger and two clips of explosive ammo.

Tony, Compu-Printer Expert: Use the Mechanic archetype for this guy, with Ground Vehicle B/R changed to the Special Skill Compu-Press Programming. Also drop Aircraft B/R. Add racial modifiers for a troll. Yes, Tony is a fearsome-looking metahuman, but he is completely harmless to the player characters, except as a distraction. He's pathologically afraid of violence and will do nothing but cower behind his machine.



Blazer, Burned-Out Mage: Not much to say about this guy, hired by Jerry, who figured he'd save money by getting firepower and magic for the price of one. Play Blazer smart.

He'll not take needless chances, and will surrender or flee if the odds look bad. Increase the archetype's Firepower to 4 and give him a smartgunned assault shotgun.

Mafia Soldiers: As many as there are PCs. No special gear—they're right out of *Sprawl*.

The variant shotgun rules from **Challenge 45** are strongly suggested for these guys. Otherwise, the referee may want to give the bad guys some other effective guns. Ω

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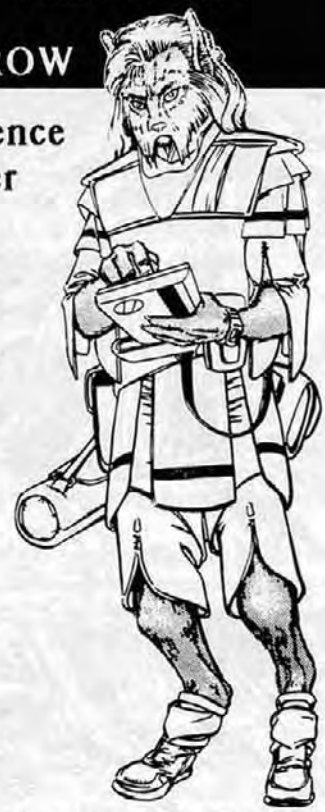
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Roleplaying
in *The Next Generation*

By James P. Gee

FASA, the maker of *Star Trek: The Role Playing Game*, has produced many useful scenarios and supplements for the original *Star Trek* era. Accurate, complete guides on the Klingons, the Federation, and starship construction, just to name a few, have been possible only because the basic facts about Kirk's time have been firmly rooted in our minds. Since the original television series is no longer being produced, every aspect of it could be explained without contradiction in future episodes. This is not true, however, for the current running series, *Star Trek: The The Next Generation*. Because this show is currently in production, it is difficult to nail down a precise account of the nature of this latest time period. Detailed material about specific topics in *The Next Generation* is impossible because the horizons of the show are growing with each episode. All in all, about 70 years of history, the time between *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier* and the present series, is unaccountable for because of this.

FASA's first attempt at bringing roleplaying to the 24th century was *The Next Generation Officer's Manual*—144 pages of material introducing players to the terms, technology and society in the new show. Produced during the first episodes, this book is lacking in many areas. For example, is says nothing about creating, playing or refereeing characters. The statistics given for the performance of many of the vessels were inconsistent, and many of the ideas have been contradicted by the second- and third-season shows. Despite its flaws, the *Officer's Manual* was a hot commodity when published and is a good introduction for the uninitiated into the realm of the 24th century. Also, referees will still find it useful for material on the rank insignia, uniforms and decorations, and some of the floorplans of *Galaxy*-class vessels (this may change as soon as FASA publishes the long-awaited Galaxy-*Class Blueprints* package.)

FASA's second endeavor in this area is the *First Year Sourcebook*. This text is infinitely better than its predecessor. As its name suggests, it is based entirely on information gathered from the show's first season. While it is more limited in scope, it sticks to the facts and is thus a much better reference text for gaming. But more importantly, the *First Year Sourcebook* contains limited information on creating characters for use in *The Next Generation*.

This article, therefore, is designed as an aid for referees and players who wish to adventure in this new part of the *Star Trek* universe. It expands the *First Year Sourcebook* by also using the second and third seasons as a reference. This text only covers playing characters in the Star Fleet of the United Federation of Planets as not enough information on the new Klingon Navy or the Romulans is available to update those characters for *The Next Generation* play.

STAR FLEET OF THE FUTURE

The organization of Star Fleet has changed dramatically from the days of Kirk and Spock. The fleet as a whole has become much more integrated, much more versatile. This fact is reflected not only in its internal structure but in the training of personnel and the



designs of its vessels as well. Originally, there were five major branches in Star Fleet—the Galaxy Exploration Command, Military Operations Command, Colonial Operations Command, Merchant Marine Command and Intelligence Command. Training Command was a small sub-branch which fed into all the larger departments, giving all personnel the same basic education.

STAR TREK®

By the time of Picard and the *Enterprise* 1701-D, Star Fleet structure is somewhat different. Following are the individual branches of the modern fleet and a brief description of their function.

Galaxy Exploration Command: This branch of Star Fleet has remained relatively unchanged over the years. It is the largest branch in existence and uses nearly 65% of all Star Fleet personnel and resources. Most vessels serve in this branch, which is responsible for the administration of most starbases in existence.

Tactical Command (TacFleet): Star Fleet Tactical Command, also called TacFleet, was created to cope with the expansion of the Federation and the new peace with the Klingons. Not only does it take over the many tasks formerly delegated to the now-defunct Military Command, but TacFleet is also charged with diplomatic strategies and planning for all of Star Fleet. Further, it encompasses the old Training Command and the office of the Judge Advocate General (JAG), Star Fleet's judicial arm. While there are very few purely military vessels left in the Fleet, Tactical Command has been given authority over every Star Fleet vessel in order to facilitate immediate military action when needed.

Research and Construction Command: Research Command incorporates into one unified body many offices within Star Fleet that were formerly scattered throughout different branches. It is charged with the design and construction of all starships. The Star Fleet Corps of Engineers, which works closely with Colonization and Terraforming commands, is now part of this division. Research Command is also responsible for the development of new weapons, medical and vessel technologies (often in cooperation with Intelligence Command), plus purely scientific missions. A number of bases and about 25 small scout vessels are allocated for this department.

Intelligence Command: Star Fleet Intelligence Command (SFIC) has undergone little change over the years. Its duties are many and often secret. For the most part, it is charged with information gathering and processing; thus, SFIC is closely associated with the Tactical Command. For more information about this branch, see FASA's *Star Fleet Intelligence Command* sourcebooks.

Colonization Command: This branch is the same as the old Colonial Operations Command, except that terraforming operations have been transferred to another branch. Colonization Command is charged with the transportation, training, administration and protection of Federation colonies and their worlds. This branch has only a few large transports of its own and often calls upon ships from Exploration Command.

Terraforming Command: Terraforming Command controls the restructuring of nonclass-M planets into ones that can support life. For more information on this, refer to page 62 of the *First Year Sourcebook*.

Merchant Marine Command: Another branch which has not changed since the days of James T. Kirk, the Merchant Marine Command is in charge of transporting supplies within Star Fleet. While it is certainly not a glamorous job, it is important. Vessels of this branch are usually older classes of heavy cruisers and frigates, modified with limited transwarp drive. Players should not confuse the Merchant Marines with the Star Fleet Ground Forces, which is under TacFleet.

SHIPBOARD ORGANIZATION

The *First Year Sourcebook* does an excellent job of defining the changes in bridge positions on Star Fleet vessels. Below are the service branches in the regular fleet, plus the redefined command positions.

Captain: The captains of today's Star Fleet vessels have their traditional duties and responsibilities, with the exception that Star Fleet Command does not (under normal circumstances) allow them to take personal command of away teams. Instead, that duty now falls to the first officer.

First Officer: Now in charge of all away teams, the first officer aboard all Federation vessels is usually the first ranking officer to make direct contact with alien races. It is the "number one's" prerogative to decide, with the captain's approval, who makes up the away team and who is to command if he does not personally lead it.

Tactical Officer: The tac officer is a combination of security chief and weapons officer. He is charged with the protection of the ship from hostile forces. The tac post on most Federation starships controls the ships weaponry, along with some communications operations as well. All starship security personnel are trained as tactical officers.

Ship's Counselor: In charge of the mental well-being of the crew, most, but not all, ship's counselors are Betazoid. On larger vessels, such as the *Galaxy*-class starships, where civilian family members are present, the counselor acts as a crew chief as well. In many cases, the counselor is the captain's chief advisor and is an expert in many alien cultures. While most counselors are line officers, they are always invaluable on away teams during first contact missions. See the *First Year Sourcebook* for more on this.

Bridge Specialist: Newly created, this position eliminates the different positions of helm, navigation and communication. Each bridge specialist specializes in either helm/navigation (e.g., Wesley Crusher) or operations (damage control, communications, etc; e.g., Commander Data), but is also crossed trained in the other, allowing any bridge specialist to take over another station if needed.

Other Ship Positions: The positions of science, medical and engineering officers remain the same as they always have been.

CREATING CHARACTERS

The processes for creating characters for use in *The Next Generation* differs little from the original game. Basically, when generating new players, the referee should follow the steps provided in the rules for *Star Trek: RPG*, substituting the following information when appropriate. These changes in character design are based on those presented on pages 60-63 in FASA's *First Year Sourcebook*, although again, they have been updated through the third season.

New Races: The only new player race introduced to date for *The Next Generation* is the Betazoids. Rules for playing Betazoid characters are located later in this article. Players may choose to be either a full Betazoid or a half Betazoid (Counselor Troi of the *Enterprise*), with the former being more adept psionically than the latter. Below are the racial modifiers that are used for both:

Racial Modifiers

Species	*STR*	*END*	*INT*	*DEX*	*CHA*	*LUC*	*PSI*
Betazoid	—	—	+5	—	+5	–25	+40

Betazoid players are allowed to have PSI scores above 99 as in most cases they have severe modifiers against them.

While the Klingons are now allies to the Federation, Worf is the only known Klingon in Star Fleet. At times, crew exchanges between Star Fleet vessels and the Klingon Defense Force occur, but only on a temporary basis. If referees wish to allow their players to act as Klingon characters trained in Star Fleet, they should use the racial modifiers presented in FASA's sourcebook *The Klingons*. Remember to specify if they are Imperial Klingons, Human fusions or Romulan fusions.

Initial Training: To determine what skills the characters acquire during their schooling at Star Fleet Academy and its branch schools, follow the original training process. Find the preacademy skills, plus assign the academy curriculum. Since the alliance with the Klingons may cause Star Fleet officers to work closely with that race, add the following skills to the list of Academy Curriculum skills: Social Sciences Klingon Law/Culture 5, Klingon Defense Force Operating Procedures 5.

Branch Schooling: For characters who are going to be either medical or science officers, use the published Branch Skill Lists. For others, changes in Star Fleet training and positions call for the use of the following supplement lists. Given in parenthesis after each branch heading is the number of years the course entails.

Bridge Command Specialists (3 years)

Branch Skills	*Value*	*Primary Skill Area*
Astrogation	20	Helm/navigation
Communication Systems Operation	20	Operations
Computer Operation	20	
Deflector Shield Operation	15	Operations
Starship Navigation	20	Helm/navigation
Starship Helm	20	Helm/navigation
Sensor Analysis	10	Operations
Starship Tactics/Strategy	10	
Damage Control Procedures	20	Operations

According to the *First Year Sourcebook*, one bridge specialist operates as helm and the other as navigation, much like on the original series—this statement seems to be in error. Many *The Next Generation* episodes show that the conn handles both these functions, while ops (operations) takes care of other matters. Thus, bridge specialists must pick a primary area of skills, either helm/navigation or operations. Characters should list their primary skills as double the value given.

Tactical Officer (3 years)

Branch Skills	*Value*
Communication Systems Operation	30
Communication Systems Technology	10
Deflector Shield Operation	20
Deflector Shield Technology	10
Starship Combat Tactics/Strategy	20
Starship Weapons Operation	35

Tactical officers are a combination of the old security and weapons officer positions. The chief tac officer is charged with the safety of the entire vessel, both internal and external. For the complete list of Tac Specialist Branch skills, referees can use the table listed in the *First Year Sourcebook* or may simply add these skills to the Security Branch list found in the original game set.

Engineering Specialists (4 years)

Use the skill list described in the original game to find these branch skills. In addition, engineering officers, according to the *First Year Sourcebook*, are cross-trained in a wider area of technological skills. Thus, to the original list, add Holodeck Systems Technology 10 and also allow the player to pick three more technology skills at 10 each.

Ship's Counselor (2.5 years)

Branch Skills	*Value*
Computer Operation	10
Communication Systems Technology	10
Communication Systems Operation	20
Languages	4 at 20 each
Medical Sciences Psychology	Any 3 races at 20 each
Negotiation/Diplomacy	30
Social Sciences	3 at 15 each
Starship Sensors	20
Transporter Operation Procedures	10

Ship's counselor is not a "wimpy" part to play; in fact, it is so challenging that I recommend it only for those who are experienced at roleplaying. While officers in this position may be non-Betazoids, they must be a member of a telepathic race. The above are the skills for ship's counselors as they appear in the *First Year Sourcebook*. They are printed here for simplicity's sake.

CADET CRUISES

Now that the branch schooling is complete, find the character's cadet cruise(s) normally. All the modifiers found in the original RPG creation process apply here, of course. Use the table below to find what division of Star Fleet the cadet cruise is served in.

Roll	*Division*
10 or less	Galaxy Exploration Command (large vessels)
11-45	Galaxy Exploration Command (small vessels)
46-65	Tactical Command
66-77	Colonization Command
78+	Merchant Marine Command

One of the major changes between this table and the one printed in the *First Year Sourcebook* is that a roll of 10 or less, which in the original game meant a position on a *Constitution*-class vessel, was supposed to place a cadet on a *Galaxy*-class ship. It was decided, however, that the USS *Enterprise* is the only known existing vessel of this class (the USS *Yamoto* was destroyed in the second season). The *Enterprise* is spearheading the exploration of the galaxy, not being used as a training vessel. Thus, the special positioning of cadets on a "large vessel" is as specific a label as can be derived at this time. As a rule, cadets do not serve in Terraforming Command on their cruises, nor is the Intelligence Command an option (to create characters in this branch, see the *SFIC* sourcebook). Continue the creation process as normal.

TOURS OF DUTY

Just as a new table was required for cadet cruises in *The Next Generation*, a similar item is needed for tours of duty. Again, all the player must do is substitute the following table for the original; the actual process has not changed. Use the standard modifiers for INT and LUC scores.

STAR TREK®

Roll	*Division*
01-20	Galaxy Exploration Command (starship duty)
21-40	Galaxy Exploration Command (starbase duty)
41-60	Tactical Command (starship duty)
61-75	Tactical Command (starbase duty)
76-86	Research Command
87-94	Colonization Command
95+	Terraforming Command

Terraforming is a long, slow process which takes many years of devoted service to culminate. Therefore, any character who rolls a 95 or higher spends an automatic two tours of duty there. Remember to roll twice for the combined lengths of the tour. The idea of defining either starship or starbase duty for the Exploration and Tactical commands comes from the new table printed in the *First Year Sourcebook*. The only difference between this table and the printed *The Next Generation* table is that this one incorporates the new divisions discovered in the second and third seasons of the television series.

PLAYING AND REFEREEING

Using the newly generated characters in the 24th century is quite similar to the original game, with the exception of the era involved. Both FASA's supplements and this article are designed to be easily incorporated into the old gaming system.

Weapons and Combat

Rules involving combat are unchanged, although the *First Year Sourcebook* does not provide any firing statistics for new weapons.

Weapons

Weapons	*Dmg*	*PB*	*SH*	*MD*	*LG*	*EX*	*AM*	*GRZ*	*DRN*	*OR*
Phaser V		1	2-6	7-12	13-40	41-60	20			35
Stun	75*							25*	1	
Wide	Stun	75*	1	2-5	—	—	—	25*	4	
H stun	150*							40*	2	
Heat	40							30	1	
Disrupt	75/150							50/70	2	
Disintegrate	D							60	4	
Phaser VIA/VIB		1	2-15	16-30	31-65	66-110	40			115
Stun	75*							25*	1	
Wide	Stun	75*	1	2-5	—	—	—	25*	4	
H stun	160*							40*	2	
Heat	55							30	1	
Disrupt	75/175							50/70	2	
Disintegrate	D							60	4	
Phaser VII		1-2	3-20	21-40	41-110	110-130	50			150
Stun	75*							30*	1	
Wide	Stun	75*	1	2-15				30*	4	
H stun	160*							50*	2	
Heat	55							30	1	
Disrupt	75/175							50/85	3	
Disintegrate	D							90	4	

*Nonpermanent damage. Stun lasts 2D10+15 minutes. H stun lasts 3D10+30 minutes.
D: Destroyed.

So far, we have seen over the past three years three different varieties of phaser sidearms. The first, called the Mk V in *The Next Generation Officer's Manual* is the small "hand" phaser. The Mk VI-A is the "broom-handle" pistol used in the first and second seasons of the show, while the Mk VI-B is a similar, more rectangular-shaped weapon used in the third season. For game purposes, these weapons are identical in function. Also mentioned in the *Officer's Manual* is the Phaser Mk VII, a rifle. Referees should refer to either of FASA's *The Next Generation* reference guides for a detailed explanation of the designs. Listed in the Weapons Table are the stats for all of these weapons. Information about the other equipment used by players in *The Next Generation* is well-explained in the *First Year Sourcebook*.

Playing Betazoids

The only new character race introduced for *The Next Generation*, Betazoids present an interesting challenge for players and referees alike. Using characters of this race is a balance between the possibilities and practicalities of being a telepath. Pure Betazoid characters may use their powers in a variety of ways. First, the character can use empathy to try to feel another's emotions. Betazoids can also telepathically communicate over distances with another, or possibly several persons at once. Betazoid/Human hybrids, however, can telepathically communicate with other Betazoids and are only empathic with other races.

Restrictions apply even here. Even the most powerful of Betazoids cannot communicate over vast stellar distances (to calculate this distance, divide the character's PSI score by 100; this equals the maximum number of light-years the player can communicate across). Such communication is fatiguing to the player, who must rest for several days afterward. Also, due to the unique structure of their neural network, Ferengis cannot be emphatically read or telepathically spoken to. Finally, Betazoids cannot control minds or heal mental damage as Vulcans can, although with intense mental probing, they may detect either. When judging empathy, both full or hybrid Betazoids will automatically succeed in an attempt if the target being's PSI is lower then theirs; if the target's PSI is higher, then the player will have to make a roll against his own PSI minus the difference between the two's PSI scores. For example, a Betazoid player with a PSI of 88 tries to read the emotions of a visiting alien dignitary, whose own PSI is 92. Since the dignitary's PSI is higher and the difference of the two PSI scores is 4, the player must roll an 84 or below to succeed.

There are many factors to consider when judging telepathic attempts at communication. The Betazoid Telepathic Contact Modifiers table lists modifiers for PSI rolls used in such an event. Remember that distance modifiers apply to empathy.

Betazoid Telepathic Contact Modifiers

Type of Contact	*Modifiers*
Empathy	
*One being, PSI less than player	No roll
*One being, PSI greater than player	–the difference of PSI scores
*Group of beings	–5 per person
Telepathy, One-Way	
Read single mind	–10
Read group of minds	–15 per mind
Telepathy, Two-Way	
Simple feelings	0
Complex message/order	–25
Conversation with Betazoid	0
Conversation with non-Betazoid	–25

Type of Target	*Modifier*
Intelligence	
Intelligent being	0
Semi-intelligent being	–20
Unintelligent creature	–40
Creature type unknown	–25
State of Mind	
Willing telepath	+1/2 other's PSI
Willing nontelepath	+1/4 other's PSI
Unaware and unresisting	+10
Resisting contact (telepath)	–other's PSI
Resisting contact (nontelepath)	–1/2 other's PSI
*Resisting empathy (telepath)	–other's PSI
*Resisting empathy (nontelepath)	–1/4 other's PSI
Other's PSI previously mind touched (doesn't include empathy)	+10
Conditions	
*Subject in sight	+5
*Subject out of sight	–10
*Subject distant (planetary scale)	–10
*Subject distant (interplanetary scale)	–45
Subject extremely distant (maximum interstellar scale) (empathy not possible)	–80

*Modifiers used on Empathy attempts.

It is suggested that the referee makes all rolls involving Betazoid psionic attempts so that the players will not gain any undue information from what modifiers are used. Also, this is a good way to prevent a Betazoid player from abusing his powers and to keep the group as a whole from depending too much on the one character. And remember, sometimes it is necessary, for the sake of plot, to keep the players in the dark about certain elements, so by making the telepathic rolls himself, the referee prevents a scenario from falling apart then and there. Another tip for referees is to write down or, in complex cases, speak privately to the Betazoid player about the results of the attempt, thus avoiding the chance that other players will learn something they shouldn't.

An excellent question which needs to be addressed involves Betazoid ethics. How far will a Betazoid go, even in the line of duty, in invading another mind? Many factors influence this topic. First off, the Betazoid culture is based on the openness one finds when dealing with a highly telepathic race. On the other hand, Betazoids do not enjoy the conflicting emotions impressed on them by alien thought processes of other races. For the most part, it is safe to say that full Betazoids will, out of respect for the other and for the sake of avoiding a headache, not mentally probe other life forms. They do, however, empathically evaluate every individual they meet; to a Betazoid, this is as natural as looking at someone. The only exception is contact with Vulcans, who consider this a breach of moral conduct.

History in the Making

Keeping scenarios within the accepted historical context is an important part of any *Star Trek* adventure, regardless of the era involved. Of course, doing this in *The Next Generation* is much more difficult a task then doing it in Kirk's time for all the reasons mentioned before—Kirk's time is the past, and we are dealing with the unforeseeable future. But, one finds oneself asking, just when does *The Next Generation* take place in relation to the original adventures? This was not a question easily answered until now. First, the referee must understand the basic concepts behind stardates. True stardates, such as the numbers used in the actual episodes of *The Next Generation*, can be used to find the chronological order of the series, but little else.

What few people realize, as explained by editor and *Trek* novelist

Robert Greenberger in DC Comics' *The Next Generation* issue 1 (Vol. 2), is that the stardates given on the show always begin with a 4 (denoting the 24th century) and then another digit denoting the season the episode appears in. Thus stardate 41150 was used for the pilot, "Encounter at Farpoint," but stardate 42010 is used for the second season opener, "The Child."

As you probably know, FASA uses a different system of stardates, called reference stardates, for the game system. These dates are organized in the form of year-month-day as yymm.dd, with the century represented by an appropriate digit and slash preceding it. Thus, January 1, 2000 would be stardate 0/0001.01, and January 1, 1990 would be –1/9001.01. For more information on this system, refer to the rule books in the original game set.

Recently, information revealed in one of the last third-season episodes gave proof positive to exactly when *The Next Generation* occurs. In the episode "Sarek," which featured the triumphant return of Spock's father, the title character, we learned that he was 202 standard years old. In "Journey to Babel," the episode from the original *Star Trek* which marked Sarek's debut, McCoy said that Sarek was 102; this leaves us to deduce that roughly 100 years has passed between Kirk's first mission with the *Enterprise* and the launch of the 1701-D. The best estimates put the episode "Journey to Babel" around stardate 2/0600, which means the third season of *The Next Generation* takes place around stardate 3/0600, or the year 2306. Surprisingly, this data supports the statement in *The Next Generation*'s *Officer's Manual* that the NCC-1701-D was launched on stardate 3/0301, three years prior to the events in the third season.

Admittedly, there exists a contradiction to the above theory. In the episode "The Neutral Zone," Data said it was the year 2364, which would be stardate 3/6400. John D. Wrbanek, who penned an article on stardates in **Challenge 43**, holds that this is a valid time period, although for the sake of clarity, this article uses Sarek's age as opposed to character dialog for a foundation for *The Next Generation* continuity. Following are some stardates of important events in *The Next Generation* to help referees select a proper stardate for their scenarios. These dates are estimates based on the order of the episodes derived from the true stardate system seen on the show.

STAR TREK®

Stardate 3/0301: The USS *Enterprise* NCC-1701-D is launched; first season begins.

Stardate 3/0304.06: The *Enterprise* becomes the first Star Fleet vessel to directly communicate with the Ferengi while trying to retrieve a stolen T-9 energy conversion unit.

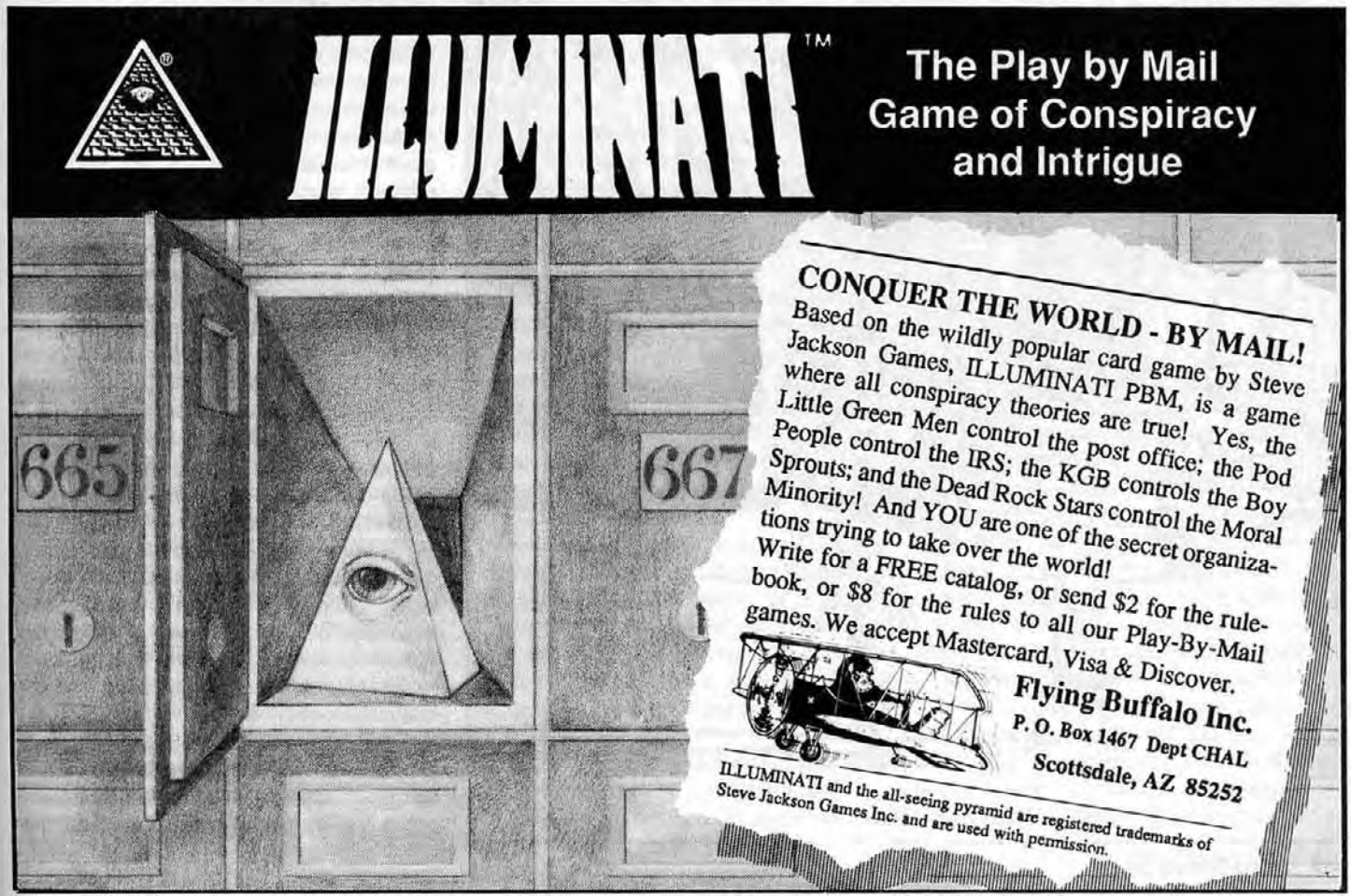
Stardate 3/0309.14: Picard and Riker of the *Enterprise* thwart an invasion of the Federation by a race of insectoid beings (called "Parasitic Invaders" in the *First Year Sourcebook*).

Stardate 3/0310.08: "The Neutral Zone" episode, where the Romulans directly confront a Federation vessel for the first time in 50 some years. Marks the emergence of the new Romulan Empire.

Stardate 3/0406.21: In an encounter with the powerful alien Q, the *Enterprise* is hurled thousands of light-years to the far reaches of the galaxy, where the crew encounters the Borg, a race of humanoid-mechanical fusions. The *Enterprise* escapes, but the Borg are believed to now be headed for the Federation.

Stardate 3/0408.19: Admiral Jarok of the Romulan Navy tries to defect to the Federation in hope of warning Star Fleet of a Romulan base in the Neutral Zone. The information was false, however, and Jarok kills himself.

Stardate 3/0512.12: The Borg reach Federation space before they were expected. Picard is taken captive and transformed into a representative of the Borg. The *Enterprise*'s main deflector dish is converted into a "final-strike" weapon, and the crew confronts the massive Borg vessel as it makes its way to the heart of the Federation. Ω



HORROR on the Borderland



By Jane M. Lindskold

One of the PCs receives the news that he has inherited a country estate in the west of Ireland from a distant relative. The executors will provide keys, deeds and maps showing the location of the house. Conditions of the inheritance are that the heir must personally take possession of the property for at least five years. The executors will not have any additional information. If relatives are questioned, the heir will discover that the deceased was wealthy and eccentric. Several other relatives received similar bequests. The heir will be encouraged to accept the inheritance.

The house is located outside the fictional hamlet of Kraighten, about 40 miles from Ardrahan. PCs will find conversation difficult in Ardrahan, near impossible in Kraighten. In the 1890s and 1920s, Gaelic was still the main language of the western peasantry, and most other Irish could not understand it. Treat Gaelic as a separate language proficiency; even a character with Linguist skill should have to struggle to communicate with the locals. Through the 1990s, the hamlet of Kraighten remains behind the times. Ardrahan is the closest rail station to Kraighten. Trains stop twice daily. A car and driver can be hired to take the investigators to Kraighten.

The terrain is desolate. To borrow Hodgson's words: "(Kraighten) is situated, alone, at the base of a low hill. Far around there spreads a waste of bleak totally inhospitable country; where, here and there at great intervals, one may come upon the ruins of some long desolate cottage—unthatched and stark. The whole land is bare and unpeopled, the very earth scarcely covering the rock that lies beneath it, and with which the country abounds, in places rising out of the soil in wave-shaped ridges."

Kraighten is a very primitive town—even in the 1990s, there are no hotels or inns. If the PCs arrive too near dark to go out and seek the house and are without camping gear, they may rent space from a family.

Even if the language barrier is crossed, none of the locals will know where the house is. If a very elderly resident is patiently questioned, he will recall fragments of old legends about the house. No details will be available, but the informant should utter vague comments about the house being a "queer place, unholy and dreadful, a place that is shunned."

The estate's map shows that the house is located on a river some miles downstream from Kraighten. As there is no road, the river is the only guide. The trip will take about two-thirds of

a day's walk due to the roughness of the terrain. Neither vehicles nor riding animals can be hired or purchased in Kraighten. If the PCs have a car, travel will still be slow, and the referee should check for tire punctures and other appropriate nuisances.

PARK

Much to surprise of the PCs, the river will suddenly vanish beneath a high embankment, apparently stranding them without a guide. If they continue over the embankment, they will see that the terrain has completely changed. The valley below holds a green tangled mass of trees and shrubs, a verdant contrast to the rocky waste.

PCs who roll against Geology or Botany skills will deduce that the river runs underground in a network of smaller branches and so more effectively waters this limited area. There is no immediate sign of the house, but a roll on Botany will recognize a good number of the plants and trees as domestic or ornamental varieties (fruit and nut trees, rose tangles, mint and other perennial herbs). This wild, tangled wood is the remains of an estate's park.

There are no paths in the park, but a Spot Hidden roll will discover a large column of haze-like spray near the center of the wood. If the day is sunny, tiny rainbows will reflect from the spray, creating a strange and wonderful display. Any PCs with appropriate professions should be permitted an Idea roll to realize that what they are seeing is probably the spray from a waterfall.

HOUSE

The PCs will find the house on a small rise at the center of the grounds, about 300 yards in front of the ravine into which the waterfall crashes. The building is a strange edifice, apparently built outside of any particular architectural tradition, though there is something of both the solid fortification and the gingerbread Victorian about it. It stands high (interior investigation will show an attic and a basement as well) and is basically square, with a wrap-around porch. From the roof, a small, almost Arabesque tower needles forth.

On first impression, the house looks utterly normal. But under close scrutiny, one begins to notice strange exceptions. For instance, the house is built of a dense greenish stone that even a successful Geology roll will fail to identify. The roofs are tin. The windows are of heavy, transparent leaded-glass set in decorative geometric patterns. The windows on the lower floor are covered with heavy iron bars set six inches apart. The exterior doors are all solid, iron-studded oak. The house is in very good repair except for the rampant vegetation which, although it grows right up to the house, does not touch it any point.

INTERIOR

The house is no more dusty than if tenants had just left. All of the floors on the porch, ground floor and basement are of the same green stone as the exterior. On the ground floor, the stone is polished smooth, resembling green marble. The floors on the upper stories and stairs are of oak. In rooms with fireplaces, the chimney and hearthstone are constructed of the same stone as the house. A white variety has been used for variation and patterning.

Curiously, given its apparent age, the house features simple in-door plumbing. A pump in the kitchen yields slightly rusty-tasting water. On the upper floor is a bathroom with a simple toilet, sink and tub.

The house has neither gas nor electricity. In a storeroom off the kitchen is a supply of oil for lanterns (two 10-gallon drums), as well as wicks, lantern chimneys and candles.

The house is furnished, although there is no evidence of personal items. Each room contains good quality furniture appropriate to the room's function, including running clocks on many mantlepieces. Although at first glance the decor appears to be early 1880s, contradictions and anachronisms are apparent to anyone who bothers to look closely.

Closet: The linen closet on the upper floor is stocked with ample linens. Curiously, none of these smell at all musty, or show any sign of moths or insects. In fact, throughout the house there is no evidence of any vermin—insect or rodent.

Kitchen: The kitchen is stocked with pots and pans. A fire is prepared, but remains unlit in the hearth.

Study: The study contains many books of general interest (science, history, literature, etc.), though none were written any later than 1850. On an excellent Library Use roll (–30% after at least a half hour's study; +5% for each additional half hour, not to exceed the PCs' skill percentage), the PCs will notice that about 25% of the books deal with odd subjects (history of countries no one has heard of, strange scientific theories, etc.) or are written in languages no one has ever heard of. There are no personal papers or books of magic occult lore. Over the fireplace in the library, elaborately framed, is a piece of needlework bearing the following couplet:

Those are not dead who let their dust lie.
Disturb your dust and certain death die.

Besides being reminiscent of a certain famous couplet, these words will mean nothing to the PCs. If the PCs do not notice the needlework at this time, they should be encouraged to notice it before the start of the spin through time.

Attic: The attic is an empty storage area with some small rooms partitioned off.

Basement: The basement contains three



rooms: a wine cellar, a root cellar and an empty storage room. With a Spot Hidden roll, on the storage room floor the PC will find a trap door. If it is lifted (resistance 09) by means of a large iron ring set in the stone, it reveals empty blackness and no steps. If the PCs listen, they will hear the sound of rushing water. On a successful Listen roll, the PCs will also hear a faint but unmistakable titter: If they continue to listen, the titter will grow to a raucous, mocking laughter for a moment before fading to tittering again. If light is lowered, the only things the PCs will see are reflections as off water or wet stone. If the light remains down the trap door for more than a few minutes, it will be smashed (by a stone thrown by a swine-demon).

TIBBS

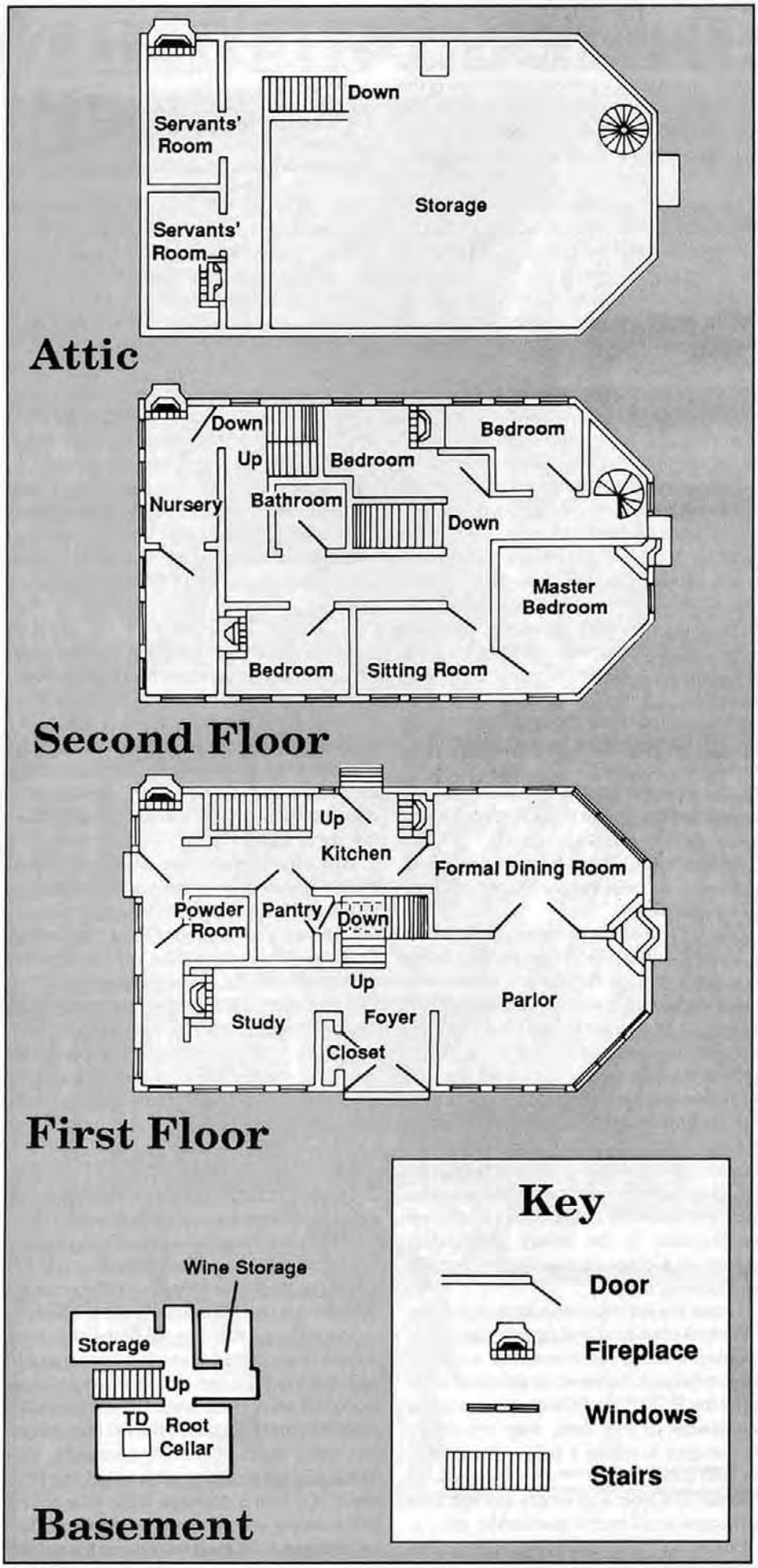
When the PCs have been in residence about an hour, their exploration will be interrupted by an unearthly wailing moan. This wail will start on a low pitch and rise, then drop and start again. A Listen roll will identify the noise as coming from the kitchen. A successful Idea roll by any PC familiar with domestic animals will identify the sound as the cry of a cat.

When the kitchen door is opened, in will march a matronly calico cat. She will be trailed by five kittens, all about six weeks old. The cat's collar reads "Tibbs," matching the basket by the fire. She will rub against the legs of the PCs, meowing to be fed. If the PCs feed her, Tibbs and her litter will stay and behave like normal cats (which they are—they were "suspended" by the spell that held the house until the house was reoccupied, where upon many things started waking).

PIT

This deep, dark ravine is where the river emerges to form a small rocky waterfall that runs for a brief way before vanishing again underground. The pit is mostly a tangle of growth so thick that it canopies the shallow river (which can be waded in most spots).

The distance from the top of the pit to the bottom is about 150 feet—there is no easy trail, but the PCs can pick their way down along the side. Have each PC roll (Dex×4) +Climb for each 50 feet. If the PC fails, have him roll a jump. If the PC succeeds, no damage is taken. If the roll is failed, the PC takes 1D6 falling damage. If the PCs have tied a safety line, there is no damage. To leave the pit, PCs must roll against the same



percentage, with the same consequences for failure.

If the PCs decide to explore the pit before entering the house, they will see nothing more than a vegetative tangle. However, if they explore after the house has been opened, they have a 50% chance of encountering 1-6 swine-demons. These will not join battle unless provoked and will usually retreat before they suffer fatalities. The longer the PCs explore, the greater chance they have of at least seeing signs that something is living down in the pit (broken branches, rough trails, footprints, etc.).

The river eventually vanishes again into the rocky ravine wall, but the opening the water vanishes into has been enlarged by the swine-demons (roll against Spot Hidden or Geology to notice the marks). This cave opening is only about three feet tall and opens into a maze of low-roofed tunnels. These eventually run underneath the house.

If the PCs decide to check out the tunnels, they will soon discover that the going is rough. For the first 100 yards, the roof is never higher than four feet (the swine-demons go on all fours) and the corridors rarely wider than five feet. The floors are damp with run-off from the river, mold and rotting vegetation. The chance of attack by the swine-demons rises to 75% here, and before any attack the PCs will hear the tittering chuckles of the swine-demons.

If the PCs penetrate deeper than 100 yards, they will find that a wide ravine bisects a large cavern. The river water spills into this ravine, creating a rapidly flowing subterranean course. Without a boat, crossing the ravine would be impossible.

Any PCs who explore the pit should emerge with the realization that the house is vulnerable from below. They may also realize that the swine-demons were restraining themselves in any attack.

SPIN THROUGH TIME

The spin through time is an increasing acceleration of time, part of mystical rites used by the Great Old Ones to separate the house and its inhabitants from their own time and and bring them to the Arena. During the spin, common physical urges are suspended. Mostly, it is simply disorienting. However, it can be dangerous.

The spin will begin with the twilight of the day selected by the referee. In the early stages, only an incredibly observant PC would notice that anything is different. However, by the arrival of full dark, PCs will be given an Idea roll –20% to notice that the clock's hands are moving faster than they should be. With the arrival of daylight, the PCs only need to make a normal Idea roll to notice that the clock's hands are spinning visibly faster. Soon, days and nights pass so

quickly that the sun and the moon appear to chase each other across the sky, becoming mere blurs of light and then not even visible, then the seasons will change, slowly at first, then faster and faster.

The PCs can watch the kittens mature with incredible rapidity, then all the cats, starting with Tibbs, will die, turning to skeletons and then pillows of dust.

By now the PCs should notice themselves growing older, more slowly than the cats but definitely changing: beards and hair grow; wrinkles form; clothing wears thinner and tatters. In time, they will actually see their bodies die and, like those of the cats, become heaps of dust. Their spirits stand separate, however, and are able to move things in a poltergeist-like fashion.

At this point, players should make a SAN roll for their characters. Characters who fail should be treated as zero SAN for the duration of the spin.

Gradually, the house itself will deteriorate. Referees may detail as they wish the cracking and falling of plaster, the breaking of glass, the crumbling of stone, etc. Then, from the spot where the house stood, the PCs will see the very sun and solar system age and die. They will feel their spirits rushed through nothingness toward a green sun into which they are sucked to whirl around a bit and then be spat out into the Arena.

Dangers: Leaving the house once the spin begins will be nearly impossible, as doors and windows seal, etc. Any PC who manages to leave the house once the spin has started will be lost, killed by maleficent magic. On a successful Occult roll, the PCs should realize that the house is protected and that staying inside is a good idea.

Remember the couplet over the fireplace? It's meaning may now become clear: If the piles of dust (the PCs' remains) are disturbed, the PCs will die, regardless of the events in the Arena. If the PCs have no Idea what to make of the couplet, the referee may offer hints on the completion of a successful Occult roll.

ARENA

When the PCs are regurgitated from the green sun, they will find that everything is apparently back to normal. Any PC who has gone insane will be back to pre-spin condition.

The illusion of normality lasts until the PCs look out the window. Then they will realize that they, the house and a portion of the park have somehow been transported into a broad chasm between circling mountains. The chasm bottom is a perfectly flat circle 10 or 12 miles in diameter, framed by unclimbable mountains,

It is doubtful that anyone would *want to climb those mountains, for* lounging among the peaks, like spectators on bleachers, are enormous representations of ancient gods of evil. Some are easily recognizable by those who make a theology, occult or anthropology roll: Set, Kali and others. Some are known to those with appropriate Cthulhu mythos knowledge: Cthulhu, Hastur, Yig, etc. Still others are wild and alien beast-like horrors of unknown races.

While the PCs study the scene, they may notice an ear flick or a tentacle wiggle—they will soon realize that these are not statues, but somehow forms of the gods themselves. PCs need to make a SAN roll, losing D3/D6.

The reason for the relatively low SAN loss is that the gods are distant and shadowed, so their full horror is not apparent. Also, these are spirit projections (similar to those PCs) not the gods themselves.

A 20-foot-tall, black-robed figure will approach the PCs from the foot of the mountains. The shape is human, but the features are hidden by the cowled robe. Any PCs familiar with Nyarlathotep should feel an unpleasant tingle of recognition. The PCs will hear the following speech:

In days not long past, a sorcerer sought to create a way through which the Old Ones could come through to your world at will. He was successful to a limited extent. With stone brought from beyond your plane, he crafted a house that stood on the borderlands of time and space. Through this house, he sought to bring the Old Ones and their minions to serve him.

His early summons brought him creatures to serve him, but they also brought the house to the attention of those who oppose the return of the Old Ones. They destroyed him and sealed the house in spells, it being beyond their power to destroy it.

When you entered the house, you broke some of those spells. But, for the house to be completely freed from the guardian magic, the minions of the old sorcerer must win the house.

Thus, you are brought here. For 24 hours, as you measure them, the house will be besieged by the minions. If you keep the house, at the end of that time you will be returned unharmed to your time and place. If you fail, the house will be returned, but the minions will be free to do with you as they wish.

Nyarlathotep's dry chuckle gives no doubt that the PCs would not be likely to survive what the minions have in mind for them. Then he will step back and, with a thunderbolt clap of his hands, announce, "Begin!"

BATTLE FOR THE HOUSE

Each battle for the house will be as individual as the PCs who defend it. Following are notes on what will and will not work.

Defense: All weapons, ammunition and other gear brought by the PCs will work as normal.



Spells will function as follows. Summon, Call, and Contact spells will not work. Gates will not work. The Elder Sign will work, but these are not quickly drawn. Other spells will work as usual, as long as they do not involve employing the energies of another being.

The house is apparently in the same shape as when the PCs took possession, no longer the decayed hulk of the spin. This means furnishings, etc. are available as barricades, projectiles and whatever other uses creative PCs can come up with. The referee should be reasonable but not liberal about what is available. This is a furnished house, not a store or warehouse.

The house can be exited now, so the outdoor resources of the park are available. If the PCs leave the park and try to cross the Arena, they will find that the surface is similar to a desert made of salt. Variant wind currents make flight over the Arena's surface impossible. Also, the minions will take possession of the house in their absence, and the PCs will be lost.

Offense: The swine-demons and the Thing will attempt to enter the house first by breaking in the doors. The outer doors (if barred and locked from within) have a resistance of 18. If this does not work, the minions will become more subtle.

Possible tactics include attacks from multiple sides at once, attacks from beneath the basement, climbing to the roof, burning the house (it won't burn, but the smoke will be an irritant and provide cover), etc. The referee should use these as guidelines, not as a blue-print for how the minions will attack.

The minions are not very bright, but they are determined to win back the house, and there are a good number of them. While the PCs need to rely on intelligent planning, the minions can "fuzzy-wuzzy" the opposition. They are not suicidal, but they will sacrifice members of their group to win. The morale of individual units can be broken by large losses.

Swine-demon weapons are primitive: thrown spears, slung rocks and hand-to-hand combat, but they do know what guns are and will use them if they can capture any.

SWINE-DEMONS (Lesser Independent Race)

Hodgson describes the physiology of the swine-demon: "It had a grotesquely human

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mouth and jaw; but with no chin of which to speak. The nose was prolonged into a snout; this it was, that, with the little green eyes, gave it such extraordinary swine-like appearance. Of the forehead there was little, and the whole face was of an unwholesome white color."

The referee should assign a base force of 30 swine-demons, plus 10 additional for each PC.

Characteristics	*Average*
Str: 3D6+2	12-13
Con: 3D6+2	12-13
Siz: 2D6+8	15
Int: 2D6+2	9
Pow: 2D6	7
Dex: 3D6	10-11
Hit Points: —	14
Move: 9	9

Weapons	*Attack%*	*Damage*
Claws	30	1D6+1D4
Spear (melee)	25	1D6+1D4
Spear (thrown)	25	1D4+1D2
Sling	20	1D4

Armor: 1 point (hide)
Spells: None
SAN: 0/1D6

THE THING
(Lesser Independent Race)

The Thing looks much like a swine-demon but stands 40 feet high. Its eyes scintillate red and green. Its claws contain a poisonous phosphorous (potency 14) that glows even in daylight and spreads to cover its victim. Victims makes a resistance save each day. If the save succeeds, the poison retreats, taking the same number of days to vanish as it did to spread. When the victim is covered (3-6 days), it dies. One Thing is an ample threat unless the PCs have a large number of distance weapons; then the referee should consider adding others.

Str: 50
Con: 50
Siz: 60
Int: 9
Pow: 14
Dex: 20
Hit Points: 55
Move: 12
Weapons: Claws: 4D6+6D6 and phosphorous poison (see above)
Armor: 4 points due to thick, rubbery skin
Spells: None
SAN: 1D3/1D8 Ω

This adventure is freely adapted from Willam Hope Hodgson's novel, The House on the Borderland. *This story, while not one of the Cthulhu mythos tales, was praised by Lovecraft as "a classic of the first water."*

Hodgson, William Hope. The House on the Borderland. *Carroll & Graf Publishers: New York, 1983.*

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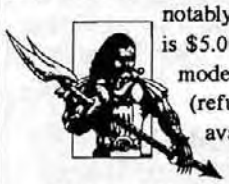
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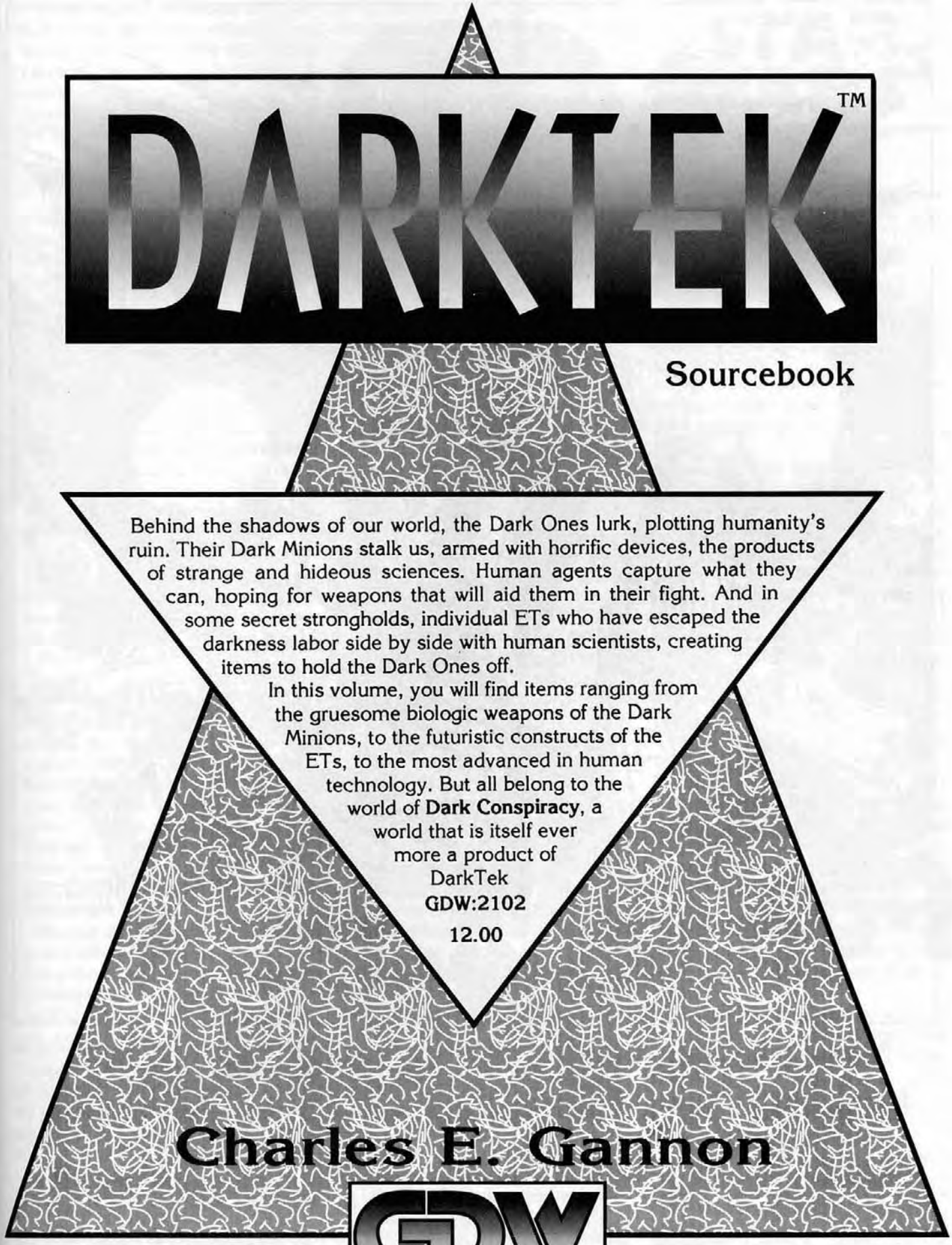


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Power Suits!

New Skills and Combat Rules

By Paul Sudlow

There comes a time in every *Star Wars* campaign when the players grow despondent with the prospect of facing the snowmen for yet another showdown, the PCs have become too powerful to be challenged by such a trifling mission as destroying another star destroyer, and the referee is running out of strange new life forms for our Rebel heroes to save from Imperial exploitation. Referees looking for new elements to add to their campaigns might consider the power suit.

Power suits have been around at least as long as the publication of Robert Heinlein's novel *Starship Troopers*. In recent years, however, the increasing influence of *animé* in America and the United Kingdom has made them very popular in gaming circles. The new skills and combat system that follow provide

the rules necessary to incorporate power suits into the *Star Wars* campaign. They can be used to give PCs new toys to play with. More importantly to the devious referee, they can also be employed to create villains that would shake even the legendary Skywalker and Solo.

NEW SKILLS

The skills described below may be added to the character templates under the respective attributes. It is suggested that they count as optional skills rather than skills automatically provided on the templates. Remember that there is a limit to the number of optional skills which may go under each ability—only one per ability.

Power Suit Operation: This mechanical skill is used when a character is wearing a power suit. Power suits, sometimes called power armor, are usually mechanical exoskeletons which the wearer gets into like a vacc suit. The power suit moves in reflexive response to the wearer's body movements within the suit; body movement dictates suit movement. Military power suits are designed to augment the strength, speed and destructive capabilities of the soldier.

Power suit models range from a light class, which is made up of little more than mechanically assisted vacc suits, to the heavy class, which can count among its ranks three-meter-high pseudo-mecha bristling with on-board heavy repeating blasters. The medium class, of course, lies between the two poles. Features and armaments vary from suit to suit, so some might be faster, stronger, more powerful, or whatever, than others. Most combat models have autonomous life support systems.

Anyone can pick up the basics of power suit operation after a few practice runs around the track. Getting used to moving around in a suit is much like "getting your sealegs" in that most of the adjustment comes in training your body to respond to the demands and peculiarities of the suit, rather than in formal training as a pilot. Still, combat situations demand more than just an adequate ability to maneuver, and novices would do well to stay out of the things except in dire emergencies.

As a result, skill rolls are not usually required when, say, a PC is simply walking around in a power suit. Only when the going gets rough, or when a character is maneuvering in 0G with retro rockets, or attempts to use on-board missile launchers and particle guns while running backward, do skill rolls become necessary. The roll required depends on how difficult the action is:

Very Easy: Running, jumping.

Easy: Dodging explosions while running, jumping.

Moderate: Maneuvering in 0G or in very light-gravity environments.

Difficult: Blasting out of a pile of crazed Gundars.

Very Difficult: Blasting out of a pile of crazed Gundars while balanced on a one-meter-wide girder.

Power Suit Repair: This is a technical skill which can be used to repair and modify power suits. The difficulty for repairing power suits depends on the damage suffered. Refer to the damage difficulty figures, as well as the working facilities die modifiers, both listed on page 43 of the *Star Wars Rulebook*. No power suit is ever Very Easy to repair.

POWER SUIT COMBAT

The introduction of power suits requires certain expansions to the *Star Wars* combat system. In keeping with the philosophy of the original game, these rules are quick and simple rather than super-realistic.

Power suits are more or less the same size as unarmored characters, so they are on the same scale. They use the same die caps as normal characters, as described in the *Star Wars Rules Companion,* page 20. Despite the mechanical aspect of power suits, they are treated similar to Stormtrooper armor and Bounty Hunter outfits in combat situations.

Combat proceeds just as if the character were not in the suit, with a few die modifiers involving three new factors: armor, speed and armaments. The first two factors are described in the Armor Table, below. As can be seen, a light power suit provides light protection and great speed, while a heavy power suit is much slower but better protected. A medium suit allows a character to move at normal speed with modest protection.

The new Movement rules on page 9 of the *Rules Companion* apply.

STAR WARS

ARMOR

Suit Type	*Armor Code*	*Meters per Speed Action*
Light	2D	15
Medium	3D	10
Heavy	4D	5

The armor code is added to the wearer's strength code for damage purposes only.

The meters per speed action describes how far a power suit can move per successful speed action at running speed.

Example: Pike Angeles, a Rebel Engineer, is in a medium power suit and is chasing a pirate wearing heavy power armor. Chasing the pirate is ruled to be an Easy action. Pike's power suit operation skill is 4D, so he easily makes his difficulty roll, as does the pirate. Pike is running at 10 meters per round, however, while the pirate is plodding along at only five meters per round. Thus, Pike is gaining five meters per round and will soon catch the desperado.

Power Suit Weaponry: The potential firepower of a power suit is assumed to increase with the armor rating, since the exoskeleton is increasingly able to support heavier weapon types. The chart below gives suggested limitations on how much weaponry can be loaded on a given chassis. Such weapons require a Heavy Weapons roll to fire. Damage is calculated on the scale of hand weapons, not ship weapons (ship weapons cannot be mounted on power suits).

The referee may wish to invent a new class of heavy weapons especially designed to be used with power armor.

WEAPON LIMITATIONS

Suit Type	*Maximum Damage Allowed*
Light	10D
Medium	15D
Heavy	20D

The Maximum Damage Allowed column shows the combined firepower permitted on a power suit of each type. Damage is calculated on the hand weapons scale.

Example: A light power suit might have a repeating blaster mounted on the shoulder (6D) and a blaster on the arm (4D). A medium suit might sport a grenade launcher (5D) and a heavy repeating blaster (8D), while a heavy power suit might have two blasters on each arm (5D each), a grenade launcher on one shoulder (5D) and another blaster (4D) in one mechanical fist.

Since engaging the weapons on a power suit is a separate action from simply maneuvering in it, such an action requires a separate Heavy Weapons roll. This presents no problem when the character is standing, walking or otherwise engaging in activities which do not require a Power Suit roll. But remember that the usual skill code reductions apply whenever a character is using more than one skill at a time, such as when the character is running in a power suit and firing at the same time (see page 12 in the *Star Wars Rulebook*).

Fire power on suits can be combined without penalty.

Example: Pike, still chasing his pirate, aims his suit weaponry (a repeating blaster and a blaster, with a combined damage of 10D) and fires on the fleeing ruffian. His Heavy Weapons skill is 4D, and the range is short, giving him an initial Easy shot. But he is also running, which has already required a Power Suit roll this round. Since using a second skill subtracts another 1D, Pike rolls 3D on his Heavy Weapons skill—with a result of 11! He hits, but barely, doing 27 points of damage (rolling 10D). The pirate, with an armor code of 4D and a strength of 3D, rolls 7D—a 24. The pirate is wounded and collapses in his suit. The heavy suit, able to stand without his active support, still crashes to the ground, overcome by its own momentum.

In the case of power suit movement only, the power suit difficulty numbers supersede and replace the usual 1D skill code penalty imposed on running characters.

Wounded characters are still penalized the usual 1D, however.

Power Suit Damage: Although power suits are on the same scale as unarmored characters, they take damage the same way starfighters do. Use the Ship Combat Damage Summary Table and rules from the *Star Wars Rulebook* (page 63) for determining damage against power suits. All damage described, such as ionization and 1D penalties, applies. There are no shields for power suits, of course.

When a power suit is severely damaged, roll for results on the Suit System Damage Table listed below. This chart was inspired by the scout walker damage tables published in West End's *Star Fall* module.

POWER SUIT SYSTEM DAMAGE

Roll	System
1	Shoulder gaskets
2	Hydraulics leak
3	Optical targeting interface
4	Weapon system
5	Electromuscular failure
6	Suit destroyed

Shoulder Gaskets: Suit shoulder gaskets are damaged, increasing the difficulty of all shots by +3.

Hydraulics Leak: Suit is slowed considerably. Free haste (no die code penalty) is given to all opponents of the power suit.

Optical Targeting Interface: The optic cells which give the suit wearer his view are damaged. Reception is sporadic; add +2 to all difficulty rolls related to firing and movement.

Weapon System: One weapon system (referee's choice) is no longer functioning and cannot be fired.

Electromuscular Failure: The suit's muscular system is damaged. Movement difficulty is increased by +5.

Suit Destroyed: Suit ceases to function and freezes in last position (or falls over). Character must take 2D damage as interior panels short circuit and blow. The character may escape by using a manual lever to pop the suit (an Easy task).

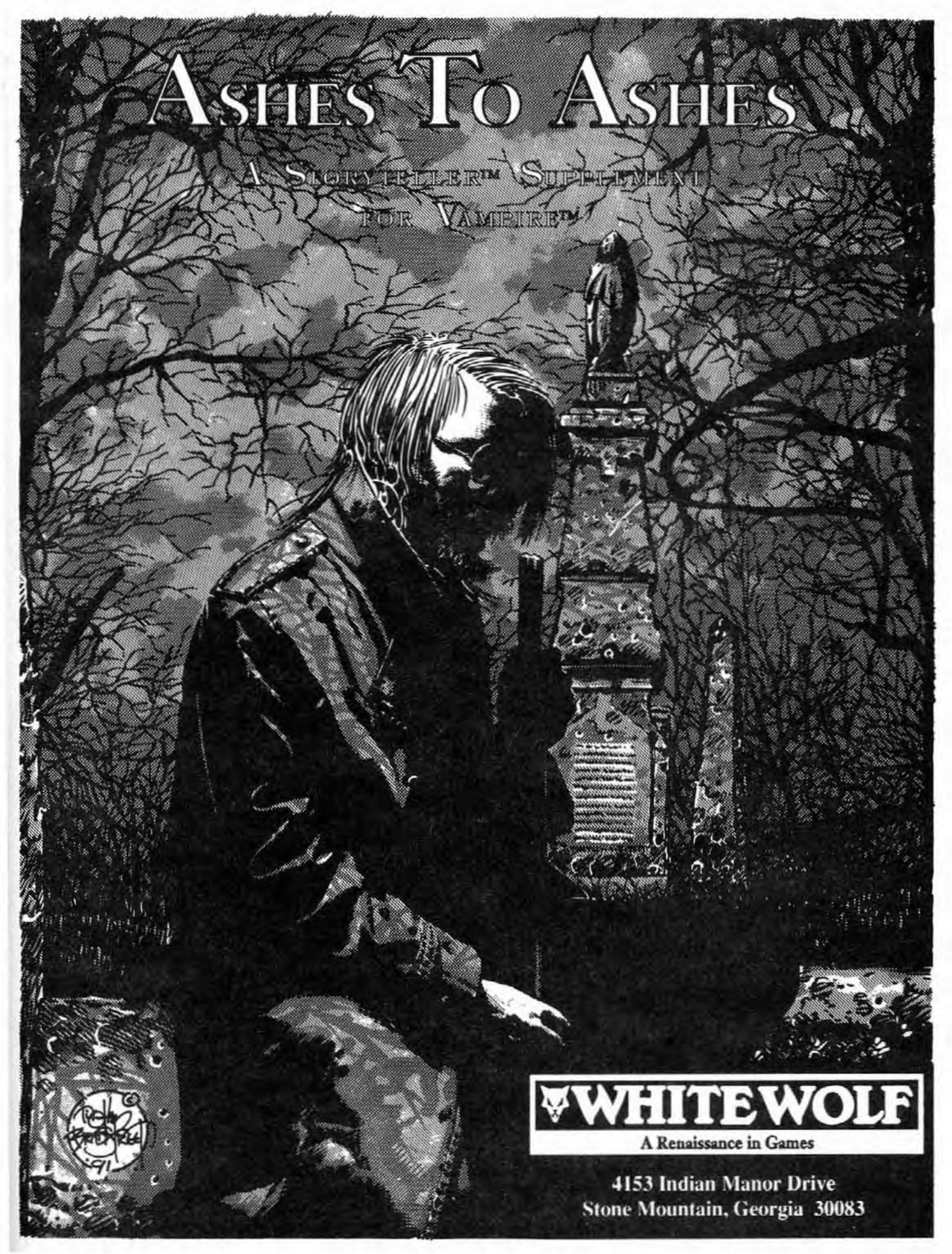
Exiting a destroyed suit takes two rounds.

IMPROVING POWER SUITS

Movement, armor, and combat systems may be improved in the same manner as ships and equipment—by spending skill points (see page 65 of the *Star Wars Rulebook* and page 29 of the *Companion* for more details). New weapons can be added to power suits by following the rules on page 30 of the *Companion*.

Add armor to the power suit as described on page 30 of the *Companion*. Note, however, that Dexterity begins to drop by the same amount since the additional armor, which the suit's servomotors were not designed to bear, is weighing the suit down. Strengthening the servomotors (restoring the Dexterity, in other words) requires a separate modification, and, alas, more skill points.




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CAMPAIGN USE OF POWER SUITS

The referee may opt to provide the player characters the same access to power suits they have to X-Wings, blasters, and medpacs. This can be a lot of fun for the players, but it may also warp slightly the flavor of *Star Wars* adventure.

Referees and players willing to push the boundaries of the game beyond the movies will not balk, of course, but many groups prefer a more purist campaign. For these groups, it is suggested that power suits remain a relative rarity in our galaxy far, far away.

Assuming that the referee has opted to introduce the suit on a low-key level, there are two methods of doing so. The suit can be a foil in a mission or it can be the goal of the mission.

- The suit as a foil presents itself as an obstacle that must be overcome by the PCs before the mission goal (whatever it is) is realized. Nothing will cause more consternation in your players than when they discover that a simple smash and grab mission has taken a rather nasty turn in the form of power suits on the backs of their adversaries.

These enemies can be Imperial Stormtroopers in experimental armor. They can also be independent bounty hunters, hostile aliens or even rogue pirates.

A particularly devious referee will note that a power suit looks remarkably like an assassin droid to PCs who have never seen one, and may consider describing it in terms of a droid on first encounter.

Remember how imposing Vader looked in his battle armor? Imagine a villain in a suit twice his size.

Perhaps more interesting than power suits for cannon fodder is a suit for the main villain of the adventure.

Develop the armor of the villain to match his personality. An arrogant, noble-type villain might have an extremely ornate model, with delicate etchings and scrollwork on the surfaces. A battle-scarred bounty hunter would probably prefer an absolutely no-nonsense machine of brutal efficiency.

- Power suits can also serve an integral part of an adventure's plot, as the goal of the mission. Perhaps the prototypes of experimental armor have been seen by Rebel spies on the fields of the Imperial Proving Grounds, and the Alliance desires to obtain a unit to assess the weapons it may soon be facing. Breaking into a maximum-security Imperial base to steal a power suit will tax even the most experienced player character.

Or maybe a manufacturer of the armor has disappeared en route to a secret Rebel rendezvous, along with her entire shipment.

Since the first method of introducing the power suit will probably end in the villain being destroyed in his armor, it best serves referees wishing to use the power suit in a one-shot adventure.

The second method can also be used as a one-time deal if handled properly (e.g., the mission is to destroy an Imperial factory manufacturing the things), but lends itself better as a way of introducing the suit into a campaign on a more permanent basis.

LIMITING USE OF POWER SUITS

However they get it, once player characters have armor, the referee is faced with a problem. Referees might notice that the power suit is quite powerful. The players sure will. A referee fearing that the power suit, with its heavy firepower and speed advantages, will overwhelm his campaign, may take certain steps to prevent the player characters from running around in them all the time.

One is obvious—a power suit needs a lot of space to operate. Characters cannot simply go striding through the hallways of their Rebel transport in combat armor without destroying all the doorways and turbo lifts, and ruining Admiral Ackbar's shiny floors. Moreover, combat power suits are designed to be used primarily on the battlefield, and will not be seen outside of military organizations and operations, if at all. PCs will attract some unwanted attention if they openly wear their armor anywhere near an urban area.

Another method of controlling the use of power suits assumes that they consume incredible amounts of power and need frequent recharging or replacing of power cells. Have a PC overly found of his armor run out of power in the middle of a firefight, and he will be less likely to rely on it next time.

Finally, consider the extreme rarity of such armor. If the Alliance can only obtain armor at high cost (both in credits and Rebel lives), it will be extremely reluctant to risk losing its meager power suit arsenal to enemy fire. Only for very important missions in which they are specifically needed is the Rebel high command likely to order their use. Player characters might be denied access to them at other times. Ω

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Battle at Plateau

By Paul J. Giguere



This scenario is designed to serve as a basis for a battle between any types of forces. This scenario also uses room tiles from *Space Hulk* to simulate subterranean combat, but no *Space Hulk* rules are used in this game.

Throughout the Imperium, hundreds of worlds contain inhabitants loyal to the Emperor. Some worlds have been in existence as far as the Emperor's memory can go back. Other worlds are fairly new and just recently populated. Occasionally a planet will reappear that had never, in the history of the Imperium, been charted or even known to exist. The explanation may be warp storms, which can cut a world completely off from Imperial contact.

Travel and communication to and from these worlds is impossible during a warp storm, which can last several centuries or more. Thus, the inhabitants, if any survive, must learn to live without the Imperium. This alters the course of their development from other Imperium worlds.

In this adventure, a new planet has recently become known to the Imperium. Code-named Plateau, the planet is void of sentient life forms. Preliminary scans indicate that the world is ancient and contains many ruins. Many claim that Plateau may contain new technologies that can be used in the service of the Emperor, and some psychic energy has been detected on the planet. Any psychic phenomena is of interest to the Imperium and many other races.

BACKGROUND

All opposing forces have arrived at the planet Plateau. Psychic activity on the planet's surface has been found to be emanating from a central location. Initial attempts at transporting troops to the center of the disturbance have resulted in some troops lost or transported to some other area of the planet. As a result, all forces have been transported several hundred miles from the center of the disturbance. Preliminary reports also indicate that no forms of gravitic vehicles will function near the center of the disturbance. Thus, all grav vehicles, plus jump and flight packs, will be useless in combat.

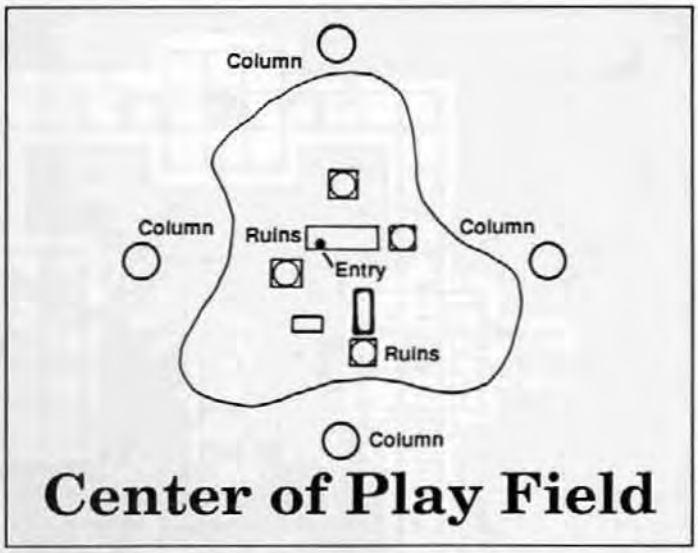
Vehicles will be close to exhausting their fuel supply by the time they reach the battle area. Since most powered/energy armor uses alternative energy sources, they need not worry about fuel supplies. It is also assumed that infantry have had time to recuperate from the trek and will be fresh for battle.

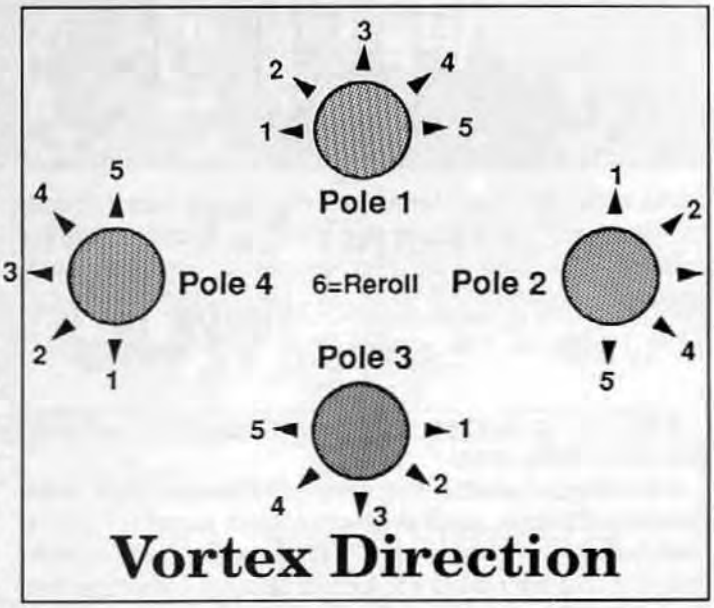
The battle begins on the edge of the play field. The only defined area of the board is the center which should be set up as shown in the diagram. Also, the *Space Hulk* underground map should be set up on a separate table as shown. The remainder of the board can be set up with any type of terrain or obstacle as decided upon by the players.

MISSION OBJECTIVES/OBSTACLES

The object of the battle is to descend into the lower level, via the entry door, and discover if there any technological devices left that may be of use. This is best accomplished by a TechMarine or similar individual who can make an accurate assessment of the value of the find. If any new technologies are found, this would be of great value to the race discovering them.

There are several obstacles other than the various opponents. Besides the lack of gravitic control at the battle area,





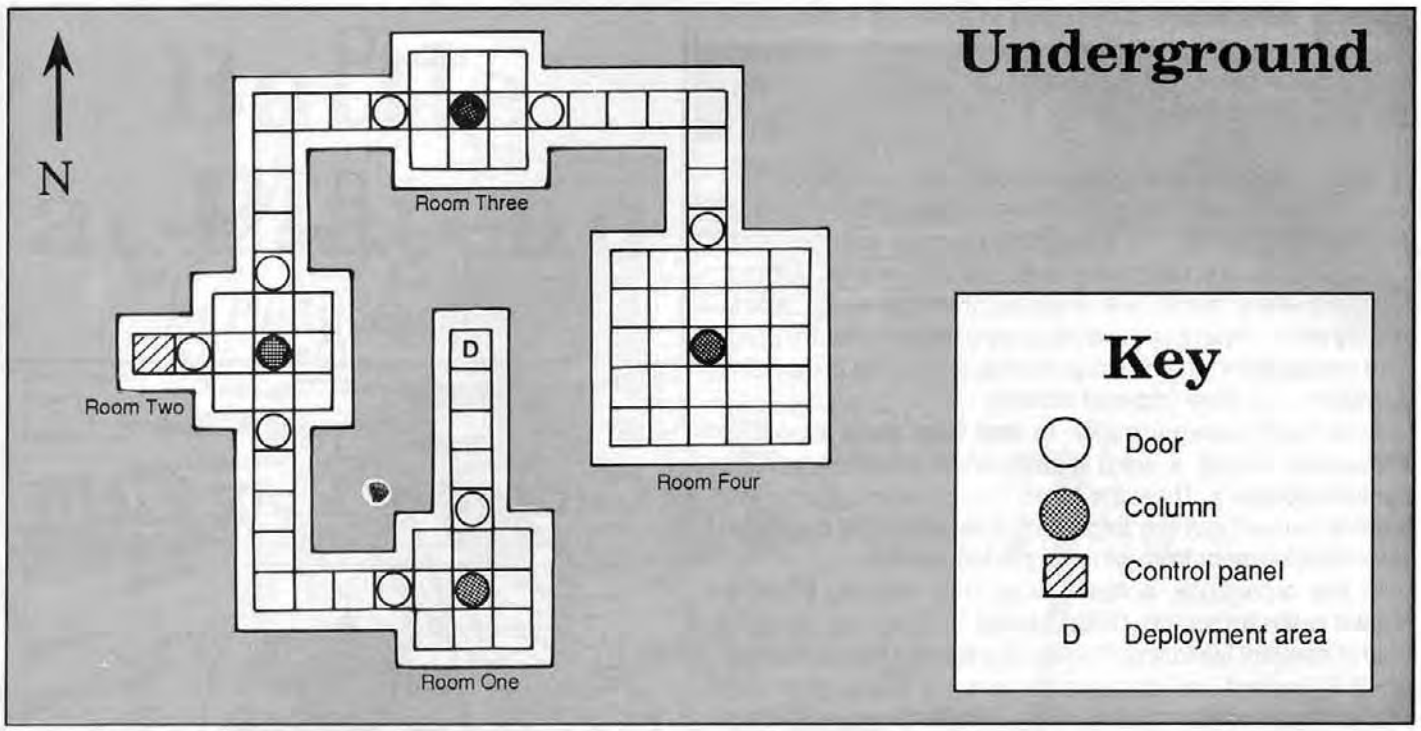
four large columns that form a diamond around the ruins, and the entry point, will project a vortex as soon as the battle commences and every turn thereafter. This is a security defense system built into the complex by its creators.

In the underground complex there is a chance of a lightning arc being projected from each of the poles, which descend into the complex from the upper surface. This lightning arc will only be projected by the poles below the planet surface. As such, no vortexes will appear in the lower level as they do in the upper one.

The poles can be destroyed by any weapon that has a strength of 8 or greater. Each pole can take four successful hits on the upper level and four on the lower before it is totally destroyed (Destroying the upper half of the pole does not destroy the lower half and its ability to project lightning arcs. If the lower half of a pole is destroyed, both the upper and lower pole will no longer function.) If the control panel is destroyed on the lower level, all the poles will become inactive. One successful hit is enough to destroy the panel.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The first force that successfully gets a TechMarine (or similar figure) into room four in the lower level will win the



battle. Any non-TechMarine oriented figure has correctly identified the contents of the room and can report his findings. (An extra turn after successful identification is needed to report.)

SPECIAL RULES

• No gravitic vehicles, flight or jump equipment will function at the battle area.

• Starting on turn one and every turn thereafter before the movement phase, each pole will project a vortex. On the Vortex Direction Diagram, roll 1D6 for each pole to determine the direction of the vortex and 2D10 to determine how far out from each pole each vortex will begin (in inches). After the turn is over, roll for vortex movement as normal per the *Warhammer 40K* rules.

• In the lower level, there is a chance that a lightning arc will be produced by each pole. Role 1D6 at the beginning of each turn. On a result of 5 or 6, the arc effect takes place. All figures within a six-inch radius from any lower-level pole should make a saving throw—the hit is automatic. If the figure fails the saving throw, he is killed instantly. The strength of the arc is 8 for save purposes.

• Each vortex can be displaced by a psycher per the *Warhammer 40K* rules.

• On turn 8, all vehicles will have exhausted their fuel supply and will come to a halt. (A vehicle will decelerate as normal until it reaches a zero speed, so it may retain mobility for several more turns depending on how fast it was traveling when it reached that turn.) Ω

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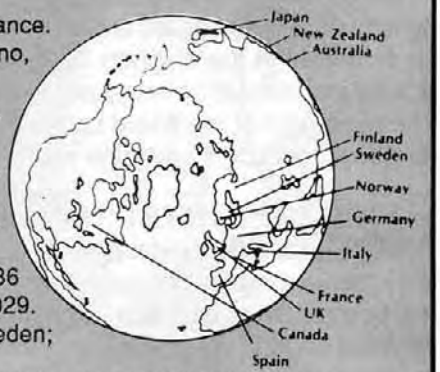
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Advanced Space Crusade

Games Workshop. $54.95 (U.S.).

Design: Jervis Johnson. Models designed by Jes Goodwin and Bob Naismith.

Boxed game containing 21 plastic models (6 Tyrannids, 15 Space Marine Scouts), 6 full-color interlocking board sections, cardboard overlays, standup doors, deployment counters, 2 12-sided dice, 36 exploration cards and a 60-page rulebook.

Game for 2-4 players. Playing time 1-3 hours.

Advanced Space Crusade is the latest in Games Workshop's series of large, complete, boxed, "3-D roleplay" games. Following the lead of *Space Hulk*, it contains enough plastic models, board sections, rules and auxiliary counters to play the game many times without repetition.

The game details one of the newest developments in the universe of *Warhammer 40,000/Rogue Trader*—the coming of the Tyrannids. Once merely a threat, the Tyrannids are now the greatest terror that can befall the galaxy, worse by far than even a Waa-Ork.

The Tyrannids are a race that rejected technological development in favor of biogenetic engineering, and they have become masters of the technique. They make nothing from metal, relying on organics for their tools, spacecraft and so on. In *Advanced Space Crusade*, their vast Hive-Fleet, even larger than the one frequently mentioned in *Warhammer 40K*, approaches the domains of Humanity, devouring everything organic in its path. To the Tyrannids, all life-forms are only raw materials to be reduced to protoplasmic slime and fed into their giant organic factories.

The information in the rulebook makes clear the reason for Genestealer infestations and spreads: Genestealers are Tyrannid constructs (I always thought so!), dispersed for the purpose of preparing entire populations for their creators and providing cheap warriors. A very nice touch on Games Workshop's part, tying together this game and the *Space Hulk* series.

The game revolves around the efforts of the Space Marine Scouts to probe into the Tyrannid bio-ship and destroy various organs vital to the ship's mission and functions, while the Tyrannid bio-warriors wake to defend their vessel. It's hinted that the Scouts only invade the smaller bio-ships, leaving the larger ones to be vaporized by the Imperial battlecraft that conveyed the Marines to the Hive-Flotilla (a mere piece of the incomparably vast Hive-Fleet). The game has two distinct phases: *exploration*, where the Marines actually probe through the ship looking for something useful to destroy, and *battle*, where they actually meet up with the Tyrannids.

Review by Craig Sheeley

For exploration, the Marine player splits his available forces up into separate lines of advance, with at least one squad probing out front and additional squads behind as reinforcements for combat. Exploration is simulated in a clever fashion first demonstrated in *Chainsaw Warrior*, each probing squad drawing random cards from its exploration deck, trying to find its way deeper into the ship. The cards contain random encounters as well as black corridors—exploring Marines might run into ambushes, nearly unprotected vital organs, traps or prisoners rescued from the Tyrannids. When the Tyrannids show up for ambush or to protect an organ, battle takes place.

Battles proceed in much the same fashion as in *Space Hulk*, with each figure having its own movement and combat characteristics, moving through the disgustingly and colorfully illustrated Tyrannid rooms, fighting as they go. The prospect of battle weighs heavily on the way the Marine player allocates his reinforcements and on the Tyrannid player's warrior deployment—depending on the battle, only certain forces can take part. The Marines have no idea what their battleground looks like, as the Tyrannid player determines it randomly and positions his forces in secret, hoping to ambush the Marines as they almost always outnumber the Tyrannids.

The differences from *Space Hulk* are immediately apparent. Instead of six-sided dice, dodecahedron 12-sided dice are used for combat. Weapons are used for snap-fire and aimed-fire, allowing more combat options, and grenades are included for more firepower. Instead of Command Points that allow extra action during the other player's turn, Extra Actions allow figures to move (and fight) twice during their own turn.

ACTION/REACTION

The greatest difference concerns action during the enemy turn. Unlike in *Space Hulk*, a figure doesn't have to go onto Overwatch to act. Each figure has a Reaction number (8 for the average Scout); if a figure sees an enemy unit do anything in its line-of-sight, a die is rolled. If the die roll is equal to or less than the figure's Reaction Number, the figure can move, fire or dive for cover before the enemy figure can do anything else! For example, a Tyrannid charges from cover, intent on meleeing a Scout. On each square of movement, the Scout has a chance to react (unless the Tyrannid is behind him—needless to say, the Marine player soon learns to adjust his troopers' facings to protect their backs). Say the Tyrannid has to go three squares in the Marine's LOS. This means the Marine has three chances to shoot or grenade the warrior charging him, and will probably get two of them with a Reaction number of 8. This means the Tyrannid will probably eat a grenade (33% chance of a kill) and a bolt-pistol shot (25% chance of a kill)—odds are against the Tyrannid making it to hand-to-hand range.

Of course, the Tyrannids get Reactions, too. But their only ranged weapon, the horrid Deathspitter, takes two actions worth of time to act—by the time a Tyrannid is ready to fire, the Marines have scattered behind cover or hastily created their own cover with blind grenades. Only a Tyrannid on Overwatch or Aimed Fire can fire his weapon without delay (it's already loaded and ready).

The game ends when the Marines have destroyed enough organs to satisfy their victory conditions or the Tyrannids have mauled enough Marines to force them to retreat. The entire game plays like a minicampaign, with battles separated by bouts of exploration, giving the players time to shore up battle-losses with new reinforcements.

BASIC FIGURES

The basic figures included in the game make for rather limited games. Space Marine Scouts are lightly armored probationary Marines, looking to prove themselves in battle so that they merit the full powered armor of the Adeptes Astartes. They carry bolt pistols and knives. One carries a heavy bolter, and the sergeant in charge of the squad carries a chainsword instead of a knife.

The Tyrannid warriors come in two varieties. The first is the warrior armed with the Deathspitter. (This is a grotesque living weapon that spits a life form resembling a shelled insect with internal fluids resembling the acid from Alien's xenomorphs. Its shape and function would give Freudian psychiatrists fits.) The second variety is the warrior armed with psionic Boneswords for close combat.

The game is adjusted to allow other figures to be used. Full Space Marine lists are included, allowing for Tactical, Assault and Devastator squads, as well as Librarians, Chaplains, Techmarines and whole Terminator squads. A player's entire Space Marine army can be used in the game, a welcome addition. (Dreadnaughts are right out. They're too big to stomp through the Tyrannid ship, although a Furibundus is about the height of a three-meter Tyrannid.) Likewise, the Tyrannid list includes stats for Genestealers (both Purestrain and Hybrids), Zoats and other not-yet-produced Tyrannid constructs. Mind-controlled Ork and Chaos Marine slaves are also available for the Tyrannids, as long as the figures are available. Articles in *White Dwarf* have already added Imperial Guard forces and Ork Warbands to the game, and a further expansion is planned, entitled *Orks vs. Tyrannids*.

EVALUATION

I like *Advanced Space Crusade*. From the articles in *White Dwarf*, it looks like a far superior system to the one employed in *Space Crusade*—the Games Workshop boyz did the right thing in merely adapting the *Space Hulk* system to this game. It plays swiftly and is certainly colorful enough—where the corridors and rooms in *Space Hulk* are drab and sinister, the hideous vascular passages of the Tyrannid ship are almost sickening. The ability to use more types of figures than are included in the game is something *Space Hulk* needs and certainly adds to the attraction of the game. Players with vast armies of figures can look forward, I hope, to army lists for every kind of army in *Warhammer 40K*. The Tyrannids have no allies. To them, every living thing is prey. This sort of situation makes for strange bedfellows; imagine the prospect of Eldar Aspect Warriors fighting alongside The Emperor's Children.

A special mention goes to Bob Naismith and Jes Goodwin for the figures. The Tyrannid models achieve a really delightful 3-D effect by having the rib-cage glued separately onto the chest, after the organs are painted different ugly colors. Bob and Jes are, in my opinion, Games Workshop's best sculptors, and their efforts should be applauded more often.

On the down side, I suspect again that the Games Workshop crew didn't really do any blind play-testing. The scenarios outline total force point values that always give the invaders half again as many points as the beleaguered Tyrannids. I never thought I'd feel sorry for something that ugly, but I do. With 1.5 times the point value, Space Marine Scouts rip right through the ship, merrily destroying the outnumbered Warriors. And if you include regular Marines or (gasp) Terminators! A Terminator Marine has a Reaction number of 10. He rarely misses his reaction. Few Tyrannids survive even the sight of a Terminator. Purestrain Genestealers fare a bit better, but the average Terminator can destroy three or four of them before they even get in range. A properly deployed Terminator squad costs as much as eight Tyrannid Warriors (or 16 Purestrain Genestealers) and can waltz through the entire ship without casualty.

Orks are almost as bad. They're not as tough as Terminators and Marines, but they make up it with specialist castes and pure numbers. I took an even number of points in Orks to make a warband, and they proceeded to maul their way through the Genestealer-reinforced Tyrannid ship with only minor casualties—there are so many of them, the defenders can't deal with them all! Too many Boyz shooting bolters and tossing grenades, reinforced by the Weirdboy's odd psychic powers and the kustom weaponz of the Mekaniaks. The Ogryn squad took the most losses, thanks to their habit of closing with the Tyrannids and Genestealers.

Space Hulk players, take note. Purestrain Genestealers are nowhere near as tough in *Advanced Space Crusade*. In *Space Hulk*, a Genestealer has a 3-1 chance to kill a Terminator Marine in close combat. In *Advanced Space Crusade*, a Genestealer has only a 1-1 chance of killing a Terminator Marine! The Genestealer rolls 3d12, adding 5 to each roll. The Terminator rolls 1d12 and adds 7 to the roll. The highest roll wins. On the average, the Genestealer has to have at least one die roll a 9+ to kill the Terminator. (In the same situation in *Warhammer 40K*, the Genestealer has 67% chance of shredding the Terminator before he even gets to try to hit back.) *Advanced Space Crusade* doesn't accurately reflect the killing power of some of the Tyrannid constructs; certainly it doesn't correspond accurately to either of the other two games that use Genestealers.

This weakness, coupled with the lower point values given for Tyrannid forces, almost ensures that a smart invasion player will stomp the Tyrannids every time. Perhaps when Games Workshop brings out the expansion *Orks vs. Tyrannids* the smaller Tyrannid Hunter-Slayer and Grabber-Slasher bio-warriors will be included—they need the Hunter-Slayers in the worst way, for they are small, cheap, fast and armed with a quick-firing Fleshborer pistol. Just the thing for killing those annoying Scouts and Boyz!

(Fleshborer, Deathspitter, Boneswords—the Tyrannid weapons and devices are masterpieces of the revolting. The artwork is beautifully disgusting and Geigeresque. Why is it that the Games Workshop artists always put more work into the loathsome subjects than they put into more wholesome pieces like Orks and Imperial Guard? Yes, in the universe of *Warhammer 40K*, Orks are wholesome!)

The designer chose to use 12-sided dice for greater probability range. Unfortunately, only two dice were included, and the game requires at least five dice (like *Space Hulk*) for easy play.

As usual, the rules are scattered all over the rulebook. Read this book carefully before you play. You'll refer to it frequently. The rules aren't hard, but they're hard to find. This is a sign of poor editing and format, typical of English games.

Oh, and the ranges on hand grenades are left out. But since the weapon ranges roughly correspond to *Warhammer 40K* short and long ranges, it's easy to extrapolate the actual range: four squares on snapshot, eight squares on aimed shot.

Despite these drawbacks, *Advanced Space Crusade* is a good game. Its price will scare away less devoted gamers; this high price was only the precursor to a general 13% price increase in almost every Games Workshop product this spring. This makes the third such increase in as many years. I don't know why GW is raising its prices like this (inflation in England? pure greed?), but it gives every appearance of a company trying to price itself out of the market. In the meantime, if you liked the *Space Hulk* series and don't mind shelling out another $55, I recommend *Advanced Space Crusade*. Ω

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VIDEOTAPES of British TV series *Star Cops*. VHS or Beta formats acceptable. Rob Prior, 262 Dunforest, Willowdale, Ontario, CANADA M2N 4J9. (53)

PHOTOCOPIES in good condition of various articles in **Challenge 27-31, 33, 34, 40-44**. Write for list to OB Vollant APA, 266577 840, GD "A" Block, FO Halifax, Halifax, Nova Scotia, CANADA B3K 2XO. (53)

PHOTOCOPY of an early *White Dwarf* article giving statistics for the Blood Guard of Stephen Donaldson's *Chronicles of Thomas Covenant* series. I will pay a reasonable price or exchange articles. Please respond to Rick Taylor, 916 S. Booker, Little Rock, AR 72204. (53)

ATLAS OF THE IMPERIUM and **76 Patrons.** If you can help, write to Marc Grossman, 21 Manor Ct., Building 2, New Brunswick, NJ 08901. (53)

ALL **TWILIGHT: 2000** articles from the following issues of **Challenge**: 25, 26, 27, 30, 31 and 36. Am willing to pay all copy and postage costs. Contact Donald K. Doll, 830 S. Wenonah Ave., Oak Park, IL 60304-1036. (52)

ORIGINALS/PHOTOCOPIES of *Stardate* or *Stardrive* magazine. Price negotiable. I also need FASA's *Triangle* supplement. Contact Cary Layton, PO Box 416, Cape Girardeau, MO 63701. (52)

IDEAS for computer programs to aid in playing and refereeing **MegaTraveller** game system. Programs will be PC compatible. Other game systems will be considered. Also want any available PC-compatible **MegaTraveller** programs (buy or trade). Programs will eventually be for sale, but the person who had the inspiration will receive a free copy of the completed program and credit in the documentation. Write to Russell Wetherington, 2611 Forbes St., Jacksonville, FL 32204. (52)

ANY *ROBOTECH* RPGs, preferably book one, *Macross*, but any will do. Contact Matt Schafer, 1796 Barker St. NE, Palm Bay, FL 32907. (52)

SECURITY LEAK magazine, Third Imperium. Originals or photocopies. Richard Artis, 151 G Meadow Place, Hope, IN 47246. (52)

ORIGINAL **TRAVELLER** material. Need rule books (#4 and up), supplements (#12+), Adventures (#9+), **Challenge** (#26, 29-35, 37-47), Traveller's Digest (any), *Grand Survey* (or *Robots, Action Aboard, Rescue on Galatea, Fate of the Sky Raiders, The Harreusa Project*. Photocopies okay. Send list, prices, conditions to Ken Bartold, 26939 Sheahan, Dearborn Heights, MI 48127. (52)

FANZINES

TRANSACTIONS of the Royal Martian Geographical Society is a quarterly publication devoted to roleplaying in the Victorian age, with a primary emphasis on the game **Space: 1889**. Each 20-page issue features several adventures, detailed descriptions of NPCs and equipment, and background articles on late-19th-century history and culture. Send a SASE to *TRMGS*, c/o Mark Clark, 598 Thompson Station Road, Newark, DE 19711-7520. (56/53)

MELBOURNE TIMES: Newsletter providing background material for the *Earth Colonies* campaign. Features include news service, world briefs, character sketches, corporate portfolios, political analysis, cultural events and more. Subscribers and contributors send SASE to *Melbourne Times*, c/o David Johnson, 11150 Beamer Road #291, Houston, TX 77089. Overseas include three IRCs. (56)

SS&V (Starships, Starports & Vehicles) is a fanzine that covers the areas listed for **MegaTraveller**. It includes one article, with the rest devoted to designs. *AR (Alien Realms)* is a quarterly fanzine covering aliens in **MegaTraveller**. Currently, two issues are available. Write to Bryan Borich, 3890 50th St., San Diego, CA 92105-3005. (53)

I WISH TO ESTABLISH a fanzine dedicated to *Warhammer* fantasy roleplaying enthusiasts. Interested parties should reply to Rick Taylor, c/o *Der Chroniken Kaiserlich*, 916 S. Booker, Little Rock, AR 72204. (53)

ABA PROCEEDINGS. Exclusively **MegaTraveller** fanzine covering Vland Domain and all areas coreward and spinward. Each issue includes 1+ starship of TL14– (no TL15). Issues 12 and 13 were 10 and 12 pages. For more information, contact Clayton R. Bush, PO Box 119, Limon, CO 80828. Send letter-sized SASE for list of available HIWG documents. Starship spreadsheets available in WK1 (IBM) format on 5.25" disks. (52)

INQUISITOR. Warhammer 40K newsletter/forum for experienced players. EQ./vehicle design, open forum, scenarios, question and answer, army calculation worksheets, unit stat cards and more. Write to *Inquisitor*, PO Box 14485, Santa Rosa, CA 95402-6485. (52)

SPINWARD TIMES—a new fanzine dealing with the merchant and economics in **MegaTraveller**. Also included are adventures, medical data, news and equipment. Write to *Spinward Times*, c/o AG Games, 823 Ponsard St., Brossard, Quebec, CANADA J4W 1W1. (51)

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Challenge 56

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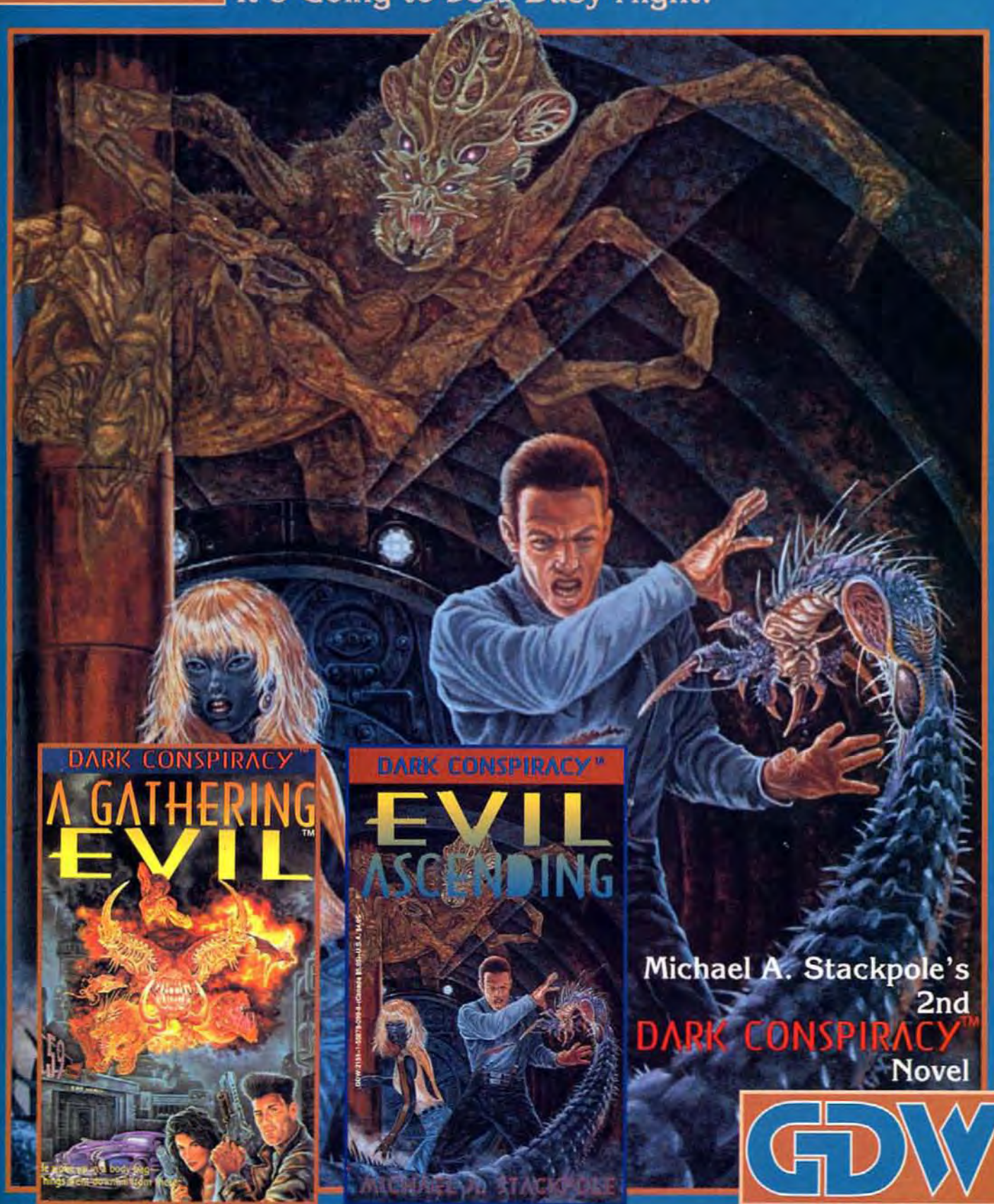
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